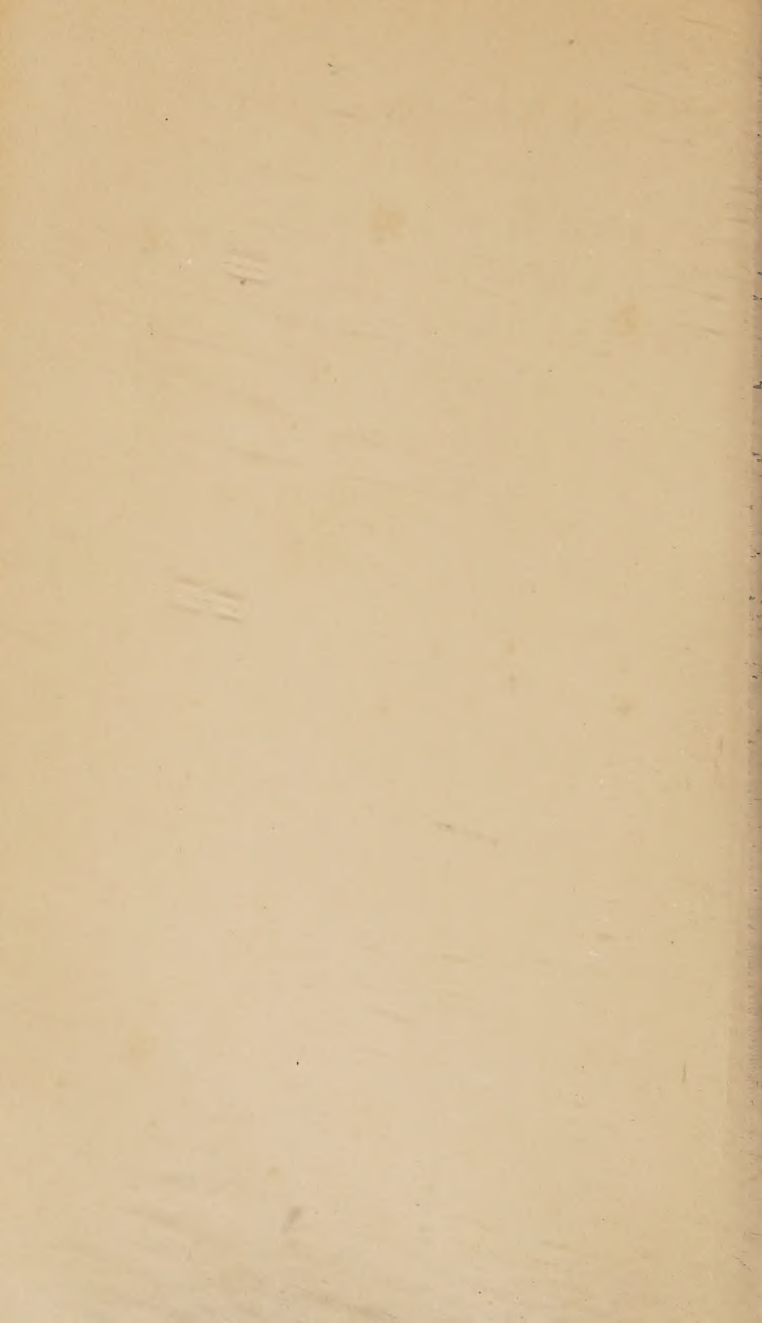






THE UNWILLING GOD

A DEAD MAN DIES

LORD OF HIMSELF

WHICH WAY PARNASSUS

MARTHA

THE PLASTIC AGE

*

Books by the Same Author

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THE UNWILLING GOD

By
Percy Marks



New York and London
HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS

1929

THE
UNWILLING GOD

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FOR
MY WIFE



THE UNWILLING GOD

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CHAPTER I

AS Bill Royce came out of the showers into the locker-room, the coach looked him over, with the proud affection of a horse-trainer stroking the flank of a thoroughbred. "Built from the ground up," he thought, "and with a football head." His glance rested lovingly on Bill's big hands. He failed to see their sensitiveness, but he noted with a pride which could not have been greater if he had made those hands himself, how long the fingers were and how broad the palms. Those hands were made to grasp a football, to throw forward passes. Bill flipped the towel over his right shoulder, grasped it at his waist with his left hand and drew it rapidly back and forth across his broad back. His legs were spread, his chest arched. The coach gloated as the muscles in the athlete's arms flexed and relaxed. They were as fluid and smooth as mercury. There at last was the perfect half-back. A fellow over six feet tall, weighing 185 pounds, broad in the shoulders, thick in the chest, lean at the waist and flat at the hips—both strong and fast;

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he had everything—and in his freshman year he had proved that he knew football. He had played the game since childhood, and he had the quick, instinctive reflex to a situation which is a divine gift to the born athlete. After ten years of fervent prayer, the coach had at last been granted his ideal half-back, and in his own profane way he gave due thanks to God.

Bill dressed leisurely, occasionally answering a question which one of his fellow players tossed his way, but was mostly silent and thoughtful. When he had pulled on his sheep-lined jacket he picked up the gaudy little hat which indicated his sophomore glory and eyed it scornfully before settling it on his brown hair, still sleek and shiny with water. Then he put a cigarette between his lips, lighted it, inhaled the smoke gratefully, and started for the door.

The coach leaped from his seat as if touched by an electric shock, and at the same instant Norman Hillcross, the captain of the team, froze into a living statue, stricken immobile in the act of thrusting a foot into the leg of his trousers. The spell lasted only a second; the grotesque statue shivered into hysterical life, dragged the trousers over its active legs, and leaped two benches in order to

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catch up with Bill, who had already paused at the door in response to an imperative call from the coach.

"Yes?" he said politely. "Did you want me, Sam?"

"Want you?" Sam Ross repeated, indignantly. "You're damn tootin' I want you."

"Say, Bill," Hillcross broke in, buttoning his trousers with feverish haste, "you can't——"

"Wait a minute, Norm," Sam interrupted. "Wait a minute. Let me do the talking."

"Well," said Bill, amiably, "I don't care much which one of you has the baby just as long as you produce it in a hurry. I've got about five minutes to get to my job, and if you're going to be long about it, you'll have to get another doctor." He puffed deeply at the cigarette and smiled at the two excited men. In the flick of an instant the smile disappeared as Ross snatched the cigarette from his lips, threw it on the floor, and ground it under his heel. "Just what *is* the big idea?" Bill asked coldly, his brown eyes bright with anger.

"What's *your* idea?" demanded Ross. "Don't you know training rules have gone into effect? Smoking is banned—and you damn well know it."

"Yeah, you bet! You know it, Bill. Whatcha

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think you're getting away with, anyway?" Hillcross chimed in, very important and youthful belligerent.

"Shut up, Norm," Ross snapped imperatively, and Hillcross subsided into silence, maintaining, however, a look of authority on his round, stupid face. After all, he *was* the captain of the team even if his chances of playing on it weren't very good.

Ross, looking like a remarkably husky schoolmaster, stared angrily at Bill and said coldly, "You've got to learn, Bill, that training rules are made to be obeyed." He snapped his fingers and added, "Why, I'd fire you off the squad like that."

"That's all right with me," said Bill, turning toward the door, "only don't snatch any more cigarettes out of my mouth."

"I'll snatch —"

"Not out of my mouth, you won't." Bill's eyes sparkled and his flat cheeks grew red under their tan. "You can snatch cigarettes from anybody on the squad, but I'm not on the squad—so just keep your hands off me."

"Bill!" Norman Hillcross cried in horror. "Bill,

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"You don't know what you're saying! Gee! you want to make the team, don't you?"

Then Bill smiled and dropped his bomb neatly between Ross and Hilleross. "I not only don't want to make the team," he said quietly, "I haven't the slightest intention of making it."

"What!" the coach and captain shouted together, Ross adding furiously, "Well, what in hell did you come out for, then?"

"Because I like to play football." Bill was no longer angry. He was amused by the horror in Hilleross's face and the consternation in Ross's. The captain was stricken dumb, but the coach could still speak, although his voice had a choked, uneven quality as if some one were pressing a cruel finger on his Adam's apple.

"Why don't you want to make the team, then?" Ross's eyes were squinted with anger and clouded with confusion. He had reason to believe he had handled every known type of undergraduate, but now he was confronted by something new. Newness disturbed him. Being a good coach, he always planned his strategy beforehand.

Bill glanced at his wrist watch and then replied: "I haven't time to explain the mystery to you now. My job's waiting. There are several rea-

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sons I've had all along. I've got a new one now. I don't like coaches with bad manners." He opened the door and was gone before either Ross or Hillcross could gather strength to reply to his heresy. They could only stare at each other in horror, outrage, and shock. Divine authority had been snubbed. Their world shook under their feet.

At a little after nine that night there was a loud rap on Bill's door. He lowered a history of economics to his lap and called, "Come in."

The door opened and revealed three men—Ross, Hillcross, and Martin Jenkins, the graduate manager. Bill smiled and rose to his feet. He knew what the men had come for, and the contempt he felt for them and for their errand colored his voice.

"It seems," he said, "that I'm being waited upon by a delegation. Come in, gentlemen. I am honored." Only Hillcross missed the frank irony. The two older men were disconcerted. They weren't used to ironic undergraduates. Nevertheless, they accepted his invitation, seated themselves on his couch, and looked uncomfortably at the pipe and the glass humidior full of tobacco on the desk. They were embarrassed; the

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pipe was like a red flag of rebellion, the tobacco like a thumbed nose.

Bill added nothing to their ease by saying: "I suppose you're all members of the Anti-Tobacco League and have come to reform me. I'm sorry, gentlemen. I'm twenty-three years old and I've been a sinner for five years—and I enjoy my sin. I am, as they say, wedded to it. I don't drink much, though, and I'm off women just now. But tobacco—well, Kipling said it: 'A woman is only a woman, but a good cigar is a smoke!'" He managed the speech well, and he felt rather pleased with himself as he dropped lazily into the Morris chair. Then he proved himself very young by lighting a cigarette. The effect was spoiled, but his audience was not subtle enough to realize that a gesture had tainted a defiance with pose.

"Don't wise-crack, Royce," Jenkins said sharply. "We're all smokers and you know it, but that doesn't mean we're either hypocrites or damn fools. We didn't come to reform you, and you know that, too. Sam and Norm here tell me you're not going to try for the team, and we want to know why not."

"Why?" Bill asked placidly.

Jenkins was confused. "Why what?"

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"Why do you want to know?"

"Why do we want to know? Oh, don't be so superior, Royce. I'm old enough to be your father, and I've seen dozens of smart-aleck kids like you come to college. You know why we want to know, but you're so conceited you want to hear us say it."

"You're wrong there," Bill contradicted quickly. "I'm not conceited, and if you think I want to hear you say I'm a good football-player, you're 'way off. I know I can play football. I've been doing it for years. I ought to be able to play. No, that isn't it. What I want to know is why it makes such a hell of a lot of difference to you three. I'm free, white, and of age. So long as I don't break the law, I can do what I damn well please. Well, I don't please to go out for the team. What's that to you? I'd like to stay on the squad because I like to play football, but if I can't play without being treated like a baby, I can get my exercise some other way. I don't want to play on the team—and that's that. Why let it worry you?"

"Because we want a good team, that's why!" cried Ross, pounding his thick thigh. "You've got

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the makings of a swell half-back, and we need you."

"Gee, Bill," said Hillcross huskily, his voice rough with emotion, "the college needs you."

Bill laughed and Jenkins jerked himself around on the couch and snapped, "Save that stuff, Norm; this isn't a rally." He turned to Bill and said more quietly: "You're the only good half-back we've got, Royce, and you know it. You're a triple-threat man, and there isn't another one in college right now. We've been banking on you, and you go and throw us down because you can't get in shape and smoke cigarettes. You're just sulking like a small boy; that's all."

Stung, Bill sat erect and dropped his manner of ironic aloofness. "Nothing of the kind," he retorted. "I'm not throwing you down and I'm not sulking. Of course, I can't play my best if I don't keep training rules, but I don't care anything about playing my best. I'm only interested in the pleasure of playing. I'm earning my way through college and I can't spare several hours a day for football. I've got to work part of every afternoon. Well, I'm not going to give evenings to skull practice; I'm going to study. I'm working for an education, not to play football,

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and if you don't like it, you can lump it." He slumped back angrily in his chair and glared at the three uncomfortable visitors. They hadn't expected a counterblast of logic and they didn't know just what to do about it.

"Plenty of other fellows find time for both," Jenkins said mollifyingly, "and they're no smarter than you are."

"Oh, no," contradicted Bill, "they don't do all I'm doing. Either that or they get rotten grades. Well, I came to college to learn something, and I can't give several hours a day to work and several hours to football and still do my studying. If other fellows can, all right. I can't. Besides, I like to play for fun. Making the team's hard work. It's harder work than almost any job. Why should I do it?"

"The college ——" began Hillcross.

"Oh, shut up!" Ross moaned, passing his hand wearily over his forehead. When Hillcross talked, Ross sympathized with Bill, even though Bill did distress and confuse him. He was used to commanding football-players and he didn't know how to argue with them.

"No, he's right," Jenkins said unexpectedly: "only we don't want to hear his line." He leaned

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toward Bill and said earnestly, "Norm would talk sadly about your duty to the college and probably make you sick the way he'd say it, but, just the same, he'd be right. You do owe something to the college."

"What?" demanded Bill. "I've paid my tuition."

"Don't wise-crack!" Jenkins said angrily.

"I'm not wise-cracking. I've paid my tuition, and if I owe anything to the college outside of that, I'd like to know what it is. Judging from two or three of my profs, I'm getting stung on the tuition."

Bill was not trying to be clever and he was honestly surprised to see how deeply shocked his three visitors were. For a few minutes they said nothing, merely stared, but finally Jenkins spoke.

"If you know nothing of loyalty," he said slowly, "there's no use talking to you. Why did you come here, anyhow?"

"For a reason you'd never guess." Bill's voice crackled with sarcasm. "I came to get an education."

"Why didn't you go to Columbia, then?" demanded Ross caustically. "It's a good college, they say."

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"I can't afford to go to a city college. New York costs too much. I wanted to go to a country college, and Raleigh was the best for the stuff I want. That's why I came here. I don't owe the college any loyalty—not yet, anyhow. I've paid my money down and I expect the college to give me something in return. Other colleges offered me good money to play football for them, but those colleges didn't have the courses I need; so I turned them down. Do you think I'm going to give my time doing something I don't want to do for nothing here, then?"

"Oh you want to be paid!" Jenkins sneered his scorn. "I thought you were playing for something. That's the nigger in the woodpile."

"I don't want to be paid." Bill flung the words at Jenkins. He hadn't been disingenuous and he resented the assertion that he had. "If I'd wanted money," he explained, eager to justify himself, "I'd have taken up two or three fraternities who hinted that I wouldn't have any expenses if I made my letter. I don't want to join a fraternity. No, I'm not asking to be paid. I'm asking to be let alone. I'm not going to play on the team, though, unless I am paid. It's that or my job. If I give up my job, I can't stay in college, and

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I can't do my work if I keep the job and try for the team, too. Now, there's the dope. If you want me enough to pay me, all right, I'll play. If you don't, for God's sake get out and let me study my econ."

Ross and Jenkins looked understandingly at each other, while Hillcross stared with round, horrified eyes at Bill. An alumnus gave Hillcross five hundred dollars a year for his "education," but Bill's blatant frankness shocked him. Why, he was asking the college to make him a professional.

"But, Bill ——" he began.

"Shut up, Norm," commanded Ross. "How much do you want, Bill?" he asked, calmly business-like.

"It doesn't make any difference how much he wants," Jenkins put in before Bill could reply; and he added as he rose to his feet, "we don't do business that way." Ross understood and looked relieved; Hillcross misunderstood and also looked relieved; Bill Royce understood too and looked openly amused.

Jenkins smiled at him and added quietly, "I think, Bill, you'll find that you understand loyalty better than you think you do now. You

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won't throw down the team when you come to think it over."

"I'll bet you won't, either," Hillcross chimed in. "You'll be back of the old college with the rest of us."

Ross moaned and looked sick.

Bill smiled. "Maybe I will," he said.

CHAPTER II

WHEN Bill came back to his room the next morning after his ten-o'clock class he found Jenkins waiting for him in the hall of the dormitory.

"'Lo, Chuck!" said Bill cheerfully, using Jenkins's nickname, as every undergraduate at Raleigh did. "Coming in?"

"For just a minute," Jenkins answered, following Bill into the room. "I just want to tell you I've found a new job for you. It pays pretty well—and it will leave you time for football."

Bill sat down on the edge of his desk and grinned amiably at the apparently serious graduate manager. Jenkins did not smile in return, but there was a sly twinkle in his eye which did not escape Bill. He declined the chair which Bill indicated with a wave of his hand and explained:

"No, I haven't time to sit down. I just want to tell you, though, Bill, that it's a good job. I met Mr. Hemmingway this morning—the president of the Trust Company, you know."

"I know him."

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"Sure. Everybody does. Well, I told him about you and how you couldn't afford to play on the team on account of the time it took and so on, and he said he had just the job for you. He's a Raleigh grad, you know, and he's mighty loyal."

"What's the job?" Bill asked. "And what does it pay?"

"I don't know what the job is, but he told me it wouldn't take much time. He said to tell you to see John—he's the janitor, you know."

"Oh, yes, I know John. What does it pay?"

"Twenty-five a week."

Jenkins smiled as he noted the surprise in Bill's face. Bill was surprised. He hadn't expected so much, but then, he reasoned quickly, Raleigh's chances for a good football team this year were unusually slim. For a moment he looked down while he did some careful estimating; then he looked up and his glance met Jenkins's squarely.

"How long will the job last?" He asked the question quietly, but there was a dare back of it, and Jenkins smiled again as he made his answer, knowing well that he was more than meeting the dare:

"The entire school year."

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Bill stood up and smiled in return. "It *does* sound like a good job, and I guess it'll leave me time to play football. I'll go down and see John this noon. Thanks a lot, Chuck."

He was amused by the indirect method Jenkins used in making the bargain. He knew exactly what had happened between Jenkins and Hemmingway, and Jenkins knew that he knew. Hemmingway was the richest man in the village, the richest in the county, so it was said, a very loyal alumnus of Raleigh, a power in the college, an ardent supporter of football, and a firm believer in the advertising value of a winning team. Under no circumstances, however, would Hemmingway pay Bill or any other man for playing, since he believed vociferously in public in the purity of college athletics. No, he wouldn't pay a man to play; he would simply give him a job and pay him several times what the job was worth. John's job as janitor at the bank was not, Bill knew, very onerous, and his need for an assistant must be rather slight. Well, he would see John and do what he was told to do. Twenty-five dollars a week more than solved all his financial problems.

"Sure," said John, when Bill went to see him.

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"Mr. Hemmingway's told me about you. I wa'n't much surprised, Bill, 'cause 'most always I have a football-player fer an assistant. I kinda thought I'd have one this year." John's ugly face wrinkled into a hundred creases, and he thrust forward his lower lip to squirt tobacco juice into a brass cuspidor ten feet away. "You look strong enough to do the work," he concluded, chuckling almost inaudibly.

"I guess I can get away with it," Bill agreed, smiling at John's joke. "What am I supposed to do?"

Again John chuckled. "Well, I says to Mr. Hemmingway," he explained; "I says to him, 'Mr. Hemmingway, jes' how much work am I a-goin' to take off'n my shoulders?' I says; and he says to me, he says, 'Not much, I'm afeard, John,' he says. He says, 'This boy plays football, John,' he says, 'and so he ain't got no time in the afternoon,' he says, 'and so you gotta give him somethin' to do before chapel in the mornin's,' he says, 'somethin' that ain't goin' to be no great physical strain,' he says. Then I says, 'Mr. Hemmingway,' I says, 'how 'bout givin' him the same job Tommy Higgins had last year?' I says; and he

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says, 'Fine.' So I guess you're a-goin' to do Tommy's work." John's silent chuckling possessed him again. Suddenly he reached up and slapped Bill on the back. "You football fellers sure git nice jobs," he said, laughing. "You have to, I guess; you're so awful delikit."

Bill laughed with him. "We certainly are, John," he confessed, really enjoying John's joke. "But what's this big job of mine?"

John began to laugh. Again he slapped Bill's back, and then, bending forward, he doubled up as if caught in a severe cramp and rocked back and forth, silent when he leaned forward, noisy with shrill cacklings and sharp snorts of glee when he reached the backward swing.

Bill waited until John's mirth was spent and then again asked for directions. John pointed to a tall grandfather's clock standing in a corner of the bank. "You wind that," he squealed.

A cynical smile twisted Bill's lips as he walked across the floor to the clock. "Hemmingway might have put up a better bluff," he thought contemptuously. He felt a little insulted. Out-right pay would not have damaged his self-respect, but there was something so petty about

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the subterfuge that he felt cheapened. He was being made a party to something unnecessarily small and shoddy. For a moment he looked at the clock; then he turned to John and laughed.

It was an eight-day clock.

CHAPTER III

SAM ROSS said nothing when Bill reported for practice that afternoon, and Bill said nothing; Norman Hillcross, however, was too delighted and too stupid to keep silent. He hurried across the locker-room when he saw Bill enter the door, and held out his hand.

"Gee! Bill," he exclaimed breathlessly, "I'm glad to see you."

The excitement in Norman's round, boyish face amused Bill even while it offended him. He shook hands with the excited captain and said much too earnestly:

"This is awfully kind of you, Norm, awfully kind. It's mighty nice to be welcomed like this after such a long absence. It makes me feel wanted—you know what I mean, sort of one of the family. It gives me a glow."

Usually any remark less subtle than a clap of thunder was beyond Norman, but he managed to realize that Bill was not entirely serious. He

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wagged his blond head wisely, nevertheless, and slapped his hand affectionately on Bill's shoulder.

"You're a great kidder, aren't you?" he cried, fairly exuding team spirit and brotherly love. "Well, you can't fool me, big boy. You're razzing me—and you were razzing us last night. I knew it all the time. You're just as loyal as the rest of us."

"Loyal? Why, I'm just busting with loyalty, Norm. I haven't smoked a cigarette today."

"Honest?" Norman cried. "Gee, that's great! I knew you'd be there when it came right down to brass tacks. We can bank on you, then?"

"Till the sands of the desert grow cold," Bill assured him flippantly, suddenly sickened by the boy's bovine earnestness. Norman reminded him of a great bull he had once seen which had tried for an hour to walk through a stout fence. The animal hadn't butted or raged or fought; it had merely pressed its shoulders against the fence and pressed and pressed. Norman labored with an idea in much the same fashion and got just about as far.

Bill dropped his shoulder unexpectedly and released it from Norman's hand. Then, regretting his bargain with Jenkins a little, he walked across

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the room to his locker and began to undress. Hill-cross stared at him unhappily and with more than a little resentment. Out of the corner of his eye Bill saw the look and thought again of the bull. It had stared in much the same way at the fence. Probably the bull did not think, but Norman did. He thought, "He's too damn snooty," and passion more than made up for the lack of elegance in his expression of the idea.

As the weeks went by, other members of the team began to express Norman's opinion of Bill audibly. They didn't like his sarcasm, and even less did they like his habit of smiling at the wrong time. The smile usually said, "You're such funny little children," and since more than half the team was composed of seniors, they resented his air of quiet maturity. Quite erroneously, they thought he was conceited about his skill at football.

Bill took his athletic gifts for granted. He was glad he had them, he enjoyed the feeling of strength and power they gave him, but he did not hold them in the high reverence necessary to conceit. He was being well paid to play, and he felt that it was up to him to play well, but he would have played well even if he had not been paid because, being a truly great athlete, he was

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something of an artist, and play which was lackadaisical or bungling gave him no pleasure. Football was proving a good job; he had always found it good fun, but he refused to consider it more than a job or a game. Under no circumstances would he admit that it was a crusade, and it was his silent but obvious scorn for the holy zeal of his teammates which aroused their rancor.

There was reason for his attitude other than his age. There were three men on the team older than he was, but they were as zealous as the youngest sophomore. Experience had matured him; it had given him an unusual slant toward both football and college, and being different in an American college is a sin that only extraordinary skill can condone. Fortunately for Bill, he had the skill, and it was particularly fortunate that it was as a football-player that he was gifted. If he had been only a scholar or a poet, he would have found the Parnassian road strewn with brambles and thorns.

His father had died when he was only eight years old and left him and his mother nearly penniless. She had been a school-teacher before her marriage and was lucky enough to find a position soon after her husband's death. Bill turned

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newsboy. It was his first job of many. It was largely by his own efforts that he acquired a high-school education. His mother's meager salary simply could not be stretched to cover the needs of two. On his graduation from high school he planned to go to college, but that summer Mrs. Royce's strength vanished as if she had been touched by black magic. Against her orders, Bill called a doctor. She was sent to bed, and there she stayed. There was an operation and more operations, doctor's bills, hospital bills, nurse's bills, a housekeeper's bills, tradesmen's bills. For four years Bill felt as if he were drowning in that sea of bills. They seemed to rain down in an endless shower, and when one was paid, it seemed to breed five new ones. Work as he would, save as he would, he was always in debt, and only football made possible the care that his mother needed.

There was a large and wealthy athletic club in his city which prided itself on its football teams. Since Bill had been the shining star and captain of his high-school eleven, the club had kept a watchful eye on him. When he graduated and went to work, he was promptly offered a free membership in the club on condition that he would

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play football. Since he liked to play the game, he was eager to accept the offer, but explained that he could not possibly afford the time.

"The boss says I can have time off when I want it," he said regretfully, "but he'll dock me for it. I'd like to play, but I need every cent I can get."

"Oh, don't worry about that," the club representative protested. "We'll see that you don't lose anything."

Then it was that Bill learned that football could be made a good paying job for an amateur. He learned what expense money meant. When an athletic friend, a sprinter, told him that his expenses were never less than a hundred dollars every time he ran, even if he did not leave the city, Bill saw that the sport madness of the American public might be made to pay his mother's hospital expenses. Not having been a college star, as his sprinter friend had been, he did not dare pad his expense account so shamelessly, but he did manage to make it large enough to double his earnings during the football season. He liked to play football, but by the time he reached college it had little glamour for him. The club players rarely had a crusading attitude. With

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them the game was a pleasure or an opportunity, but none of them felt that the club would be disgraced or their honor smirched if a game was lost. It was seldom indeed that one of them went "football crazy," and Bill soon lost the capacity for the fighting madness which had often seized him during the high-school games; and the capacity did not return when he played for Raleigh College. He played hard for the joy of the contest, but he was always coolly in possession of himself, rarely excited, never really aroused.

His mother died when he was twenty-one. It took him a year's hard work and careful saving to pay the bills, and then at last he felt that he had earned his freedom and the right to a college education. He was as eager for college as he had been at eighteen, but for entirely different reasons. Then it was the romance of college that had appealed to him; now it was the opportunities that college offered. In the hard school of experience he had learned the practical value of knowledge. If a college degree was not a magic key which opened the door of opportunity, it was at least mighty good oil for its hinges; the door opened much easier, he had noticed, if one had a degree than if one didn't have it.

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He had been too carefully trained, however, by an intelligent mother to be altogether practical. The need for money since his childhood had made him value dollars for more perhaps than they were worth, but the hunger for a rich and satisfying life was far greater than his hunger for money. He was intelligent and ambitious and he knew well that he was not a genius. Money he must have, at least the tools with which to earn money, and he believed that college could give him those tools. It could do more; it could give him the learning whereby he might plumb some of the mysteries of the complex experience which is called Life. History fascinated him; he was thrilled by the splendid drama of the world; he wanted to know everything about that relentless battle between man and man or man and nature which is called economics; he wanted to learn the secrets of its generals and historians so that they might become his weapons and his shield; he wanted to know what the wise men of all time had thought and said about God and man; he wanted to learn the songs that the great singers had sung, to read the tales that the great storytellers had told, to learn the mysteries that men had unraveled from a rock or captured in a test

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tube; he wanted to speak the tongues of other races so that their lives and literatures might be an open book to him—in brief, he wanted an education. He was avid with curiosity and wanted more than he could get, but in wanting it, in knowing what he wanted, and in knowing that it existed for him to want, he had come to college with a point of view as rare as it is admirable.

His finances for four years of college did not worry him. He had earned his way too long to think much about getting a job. When he came to college he had his tuition and a little more, and before the first week was over he had found work which would not take much time and which would provide as much money as he needed. During the summers he could make his tuition. He settled down to study.

Life, however, immediately became complex. He had chosen a country college for several reasons: he thought it would be less expensive than one in a city, it would probably be more democratic, it would offer far fewer distractions, and there would certainly not be so many girls. Perhaps he was right on every count, but he doubted if he was right on any except the last. True, he could wear old clothes at Raleigh and

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be strictly à la mode, but the tuition was as high there, books as expensive as elsewhere, and the quiet of a small town was a constant temptation to go to a large one. He doubted the democracy which was constantly and noisily avowed and rarely practiced, and the distractions were endless. The girls, however, were few in number and mostly unattractive. In studious moments, he offered up thanks; at other moments he thought wistfully of girls whom he knew at home. Raleigh College did offer the courses in economics and foreign trade for which it was famous and for which Bill had a keen interest. In almost every other respect, it disappointed him.

Bill did not trust himself with girls. His morals did not trouble him very much one way or the other, but he did want to study, and girls had a way of dancing blithely into his mind and staying there. Besides, he was just a little cynical about them, a little bitter. He had fallen madly in love when he was seventeen with a girl five years his senior. His chastity hadn't mattered much to him. In a way he was grateful to her for destroying it. Something rather inconvenient was definitely out of the way. He didn't have to think about it any more. He had thought at the

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time that she had given herself to him in a glorious abandonment to love, and he had worshiped her for it. When he realized later that she had seduced him, he hated her. He still did. He had held her so high and she had fallen so low that he could never forgive her. There had been other experiences, a few that had given him lovely memories to cherish, others that he wanted to forget. The most unpleasant had occurred while he was choosing a college. It had decided him definitely against a coeducational institution and strengthened his inclination to seek a college which was as far as possible strictly inhabited by men. There were no women at Raleigh, but there were some in the village. Most of them had bad teeth, red necks, and thick ankles. Theoretically, Bill thanked God for their lack of beauty; actually he often found himself wishing that just one of them was pretty enough to make his monklike existence a little less attractive.

There were no pretty girls to distract his attention from his studies, but there were fraternities which insisted on rushing a star football player regardless of how often and how passionately he insisted that he didn't want to be rushed; there were rallies, formal and extemporaneous, that

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made the campus hideous with their din; there was the hazing which no freshman escaped, not even the best half-back on the freshman team; there were hums in the springtime on the campus which one was supposed to attend, and which one might as well attend because when an entire college sings, a dormitory room is no place to study; there were noisy kids—"college men," forsooth—playing baseball and cricket in the halls; there was endless noise, shouting, singing, whooping—gleeful young noise which sometimes attracted Bill so much that he was almost sick with desire to join in it, and which sometimes maddened him into a contemptuous rage.

He had given up his dreams about "college life" when he was eighteen, and he had no intention now of joining in it. Sometimes it was amusing, he thought; sometimes it was silly, but, amusing or silly, it demanded valuable hours and he had none to spare. He had allowed himself four precious years in which to acquire an education; he would not sacrifice a moment of it to childish horseplay. When he was a freshman, he submitted with an excellent show of good nature to the hazing because he had sense enough to know that the less he objected the sooner it

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would end. Otherwise he had made no attempt to be tactful. He played football because he found it much the pleasantest way to get needed exercise, but he found no thrill in being on a freshman team which seemed hopelessly bungling after his four years of experience on a club team composed almost entirely of great players.

He hadn't thought about the captaincy of the freshman team until it was mentioned to him several times. Since he was the outstanding star, every one took it for granted, he found, that he would be elected captain. The election did not take place until three weeks after college opened, Bill in the meantime acting as captain by the coach's appointment. When Harry Coombs received the honor, Bill was a little hurt, not because he cared about the captaincy but because he felt that his teammates did not like him and he wanted to be liked. It was bruited about that the coach was responsible for the selection of Coombs, that he felt that Bill was lacking in *esprit de corps*, and Bill knew that there was a little justice at least in the condemnation. He learned the true reason a week after Coombs was elected.

A senior called on Bill and for the third time

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offered him a pledge button to his fraternity and, like Cæsar, Bill for the third time declined. "I'm not going to join any fraternity," he said.

"But, Bill," his caller argued, "you can't get anywhere on this campus unless you do. You ought to know that now."

"Get anywhere? What do you mean? I'm getting where I want to go."

"Oh, you know what I mean. Be somebody on the campus. You can't go around being snooty and high-hat about the fraternities and get anywhere. You ought to know that now."

"Why?"

The boy wondered if Bill was trying to make a fool of him or if he was just "very, very dumb." He looked at Bill suspiciously and then asked:

"How many fraternity bids did you turn down during rushing?"

"I don't know exactly," Bill replied. "I didn't keep count—eight or ten, I guess—maybe a few more."

"Did you honestly think you could get away with that?"

"Get away with what?" Bill demanded, a little angered. "I haven't tried to get away with anything. I told the fellows I didn't want to join a

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fraternity. You sound as if I'd tried to steal some fraternity's sacred goat or holy chalice or something."

Bill's irreverence was too much for his visitor's patience. "You know damn well what I mean," he snapped. "You can't turn down eight or ten fraternities on this man's campus and get anywhere. Why do you suppose Harry Coombs got the captaincy of the freshman team?"

Bill's brown eyes lighted with understanding and he laughed in honest relief. So that's all it was—fraternity politics.

"You may never believe it," he said, smiling broadly, "but I never guessed the reason. I'm just that innocent. And I don't suppose you'll believe either that I don't give a hoot in hell about that."

The other stared at him unbelievably. "You don't? You mean you honestly don't care that you were rooked out of it? They're going to nominate you for class president next week. Don't you care about that either?"

"I won't run if they nominate me," Bill said flatly. "I haven't time for any of that stuff."

There was a pause while the senior continued

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his confused appraisal of the "queer bird" opposite him. Finally he asked slowly:

"Say, what are you, anyway?"

"Maybe I'm just a greasy grind," said Bill, smiling.

The boy looked at Bill's lean, powerful body, at his handsome face, his clear brown eyes and even white teeth, at his shining brown hair; then his nose wrinkled contemptuously and he snorted, "Like hell you are!" and left the room.

Bill did receive the nomination for the presidency of his class and refused to run. Some of his classmates thought that he was holding out for higher honors when he was a senior, some of them thought that he considered himself above any office that could be offered him, and some of them thought that he was crazy. Nobody believed his perfectly honest excuse that he did not have time for class offices or for anything else of the kind. Everybody else had time. Why shouldn't he?

Several freshmen who had not "made" a fraternity pleaded with him to reconsider his decision. "It's our one chance to lick the fraternities," they explained. "You'll get the entire non-

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fraternity vote and some of the fraternity men will vote for you, too."

"But I haven't anything against the fraternities," Bill explained patiently. "They can elect all the class officers, for all I care. I don't want to join a fraternity and I don't want to be a class officer either; that's all."

That wasn't, Bill found, quite all. His blunt refusal to accept the bid of any fraternity had turned the Greek letter men against him; his equally blunt refusal to be the champion of the non-fraternity men turned them against him; he had definitely announced that he was a lone wolf—and college boys run in packs.

If Bill had been a weakling, the packs would have passed him by contemptuously and left him in peace; if he had been, say, a poet, they might have sneered at his queerness and shied away from it, but at worst they would have been glad to let him run alone. Bill, however, was an athlete, a brilliant football star, and so he could neither be sneered out of existence nor ignored. He must either lead the pack or be destroyed. Since there was no practical way of destroying him, and since his strength was invaluable, he was permitted to live and to fight, but the battle was

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made hard, very hard. Bill could not understand the cruel situation in which he found himself; he was much older before he learned that men cannot forgive a god who refuses their worship.

He knew that he was making enemies, but he did not care. He was keen enough to see that he was admired for his end runs far more than he was for his brains or for any honest worth which he might claim. When he won a game by hurling a successful forward pass for thirty yards, his classmates loved him; when he asked to be let alone so that he might study, they despised him. Well, if they were no bigger than that, he honored only their contempt. He wanted none of their friendship. In time they might come to hate him enough to leave him in peace. He asked too much. As well ask men to ignore the sun shining in the heavens as to ask college boys to ignore their greatest athlete. They resented Bill's attitude, but they could not forget him. Bill did not care very much until their resentment touched his pocketbook. Then he protested.

CHAPTER IV

BILL had aspired in his freshman year to the Morgan Hurlbut Scholarship, a five-hundred-dollar award made each year at the end of the first semester to a freshman of outstanding athletic and scholastic ability. Since Bill was easily the most gifted athlete in his class and since he had received only A's in his studies, he confidently awaited the announcement that he had won the award. He was angered and humiliated when it was given to Harry Coombs, the captain of the freshman football team. "More fraternity politics," he thought bitterly. "Well, they can all go to hell."

He would have let it go at that if he had not met Harry the day after the award was announced. He was walking morosely across the campus when he heard his name called. He paused, turned, and saw Harry running to catch up with him.

"Hey, Bill!" he yelled; "wait a minute!"

A second later Harry caught up with Bill.

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"Wait until I get my breath," he panted heavily. "I was 'way down by the postoffice when I saw you."

"Sure," Bill agreed amiably, wondering what Harry wanted. He hoped he wasn't going to talk about the scholarship.

Harry's boyish face was flushed with the exertion of running and with embarrassment. His blue eyes were very earnest as he looked at Bill, and he was much too confused to be tactful.

"Gee, Bill," he said at last, still breathing heavily, "I feel awful about that scholarship."

The pleasant look faded from Bill's face, and something inside of him tightened defensively. "Why?" he asked shortly. Unjustly he thought Harry was being disingenuous, that he was pretending to a concern which he did not feel.

"I know I didn't deserve it—and I don't know why I got it. I need the coin all right, but, gosh, Bill, you're a better student than I am and you can play rings around me at football. I seem to be rooking you right and left, and it makes me feel rotten." As Bill looked at him dubiously, he added with passionate sincerity: "I mean it, Bill. Don't look at me like I was a dirty hypocrite. You ought to have been captain and you

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ought to have got the scholarship. Why, I never got a grade over B. Somebody's doing you dirt, Bill, and I don't know what to do about it."

Suddenly Bill knew that the boy was honest and his heart warmed to him. "You're awfully decent, Harry," he said gratefully, "as white as they make 'em. You can't do anything, I guess, but you can bank on it that I'm not holding anything against you."

Harry's face cleared and he smiled his relief. "God, I'm glad," he cried. "I was afraid you'd hate me. I asked the dean why you hadn't got the scholarship and he said because I deserved it. I knew he was lying, but you know how he passes out the soft soap."

"Like a factory. You couldn't believe anything he said even if it was the truth. Why, I don't know what the trouble is, Harry. I'll admit I thought I'd get the five hundred, and it's a kick in the teeth to lose it. I can get along without it, though, and I guess you need it as much as I do—more, maybe. I'm not sore because you got it, and I didn't want to be captain. It makes me fighting mad, just the same, to get stabbed in the back this way. I owe you an apology, too. I thought you and the Nu Delts were

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back of this, and now I see I'm wrong. It's somebody higher up."

"Oh, I didn't expect to get it," Harry protested, horrified because some one had thought him capable of such chicanery. "And I know the fraternity never tried to get it for me. I'll turn the money back if they'll let you have it."

The last of Bill's resentment melted in the glow that warmed him. "Oh, no, Harry," he cried, gripping the boy's shoulder in the intensity of his refusal. "I wouldn't take it. You're the damndest decentest fellow I ever knew, and I'm glad now you won out. I'll tell you, though, what I'm going to do. I'm going to the Prex and find out why they're knifing me."

Harry flushed a deeper red when Bill praised him and his eyes shone with a crusading light. "I'll go with you," he offered eagerly—so eagerly that he seemed hardly half his eighteen years.

"No, you won't." Bill laughed and slapped Harry's shoulder before removing his hand. "You've done more than enough now. You just keep the money, and you can bank on it that I'm gladder than anybody else that you got it. I'll fight it out with Prexie alone."

The next morning he called on the president

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during the hour he reserved daily for students. Dr. Stanton was a large, muscular man, still handsome for all his sixty years, with high color in his full cheeks, and thick, crisply curly hair. He had once been a professor of economics, but he had early become an administrator, and among college presidents he was considered outstanding. Business men respected him and undergraduates adored him. He never shed his dignity, but he could unbend so graciously that students felt that he was quite human even if he was a great man.

He welcomed Bill pleasantly. He rose from behind his desk and held out his strong hand. "I am glad to see you, Mr. Royce," he said simply. "I have seen you play football, and I know something too of your admirable scholastic record." He grasped Bill's hand warmly and then motioned him to a chair. "Is there anything troubling you?" he asked as he seated himself behind his desk again, "or have you come just to get acquainted? I hope," he added, smiling, "it's the latter."

A little embarrassed, Bill was glad Dr. Stanton had given him such an easy opening. "No; it's the former," he said; "I mean my football and scholastic record."

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The president leaned back in his chair and looked blankly at Bill through his spectacles. "I'm afraid I don't understand," he murmured politely.

It was Bill's way to take the bull by the horns. He wasn't privy to the tricks of diplomatic evasion; so he slid forward a little in his chair and said directly: "I want to talk to you about the Morgan Hurlbut Scholarship, sir. I wouldn't have come if Harry Coombs hadn't offered to return it. I told him that I wouldn't take it if he did—I mean if it was offered to me, but he and I agreed that I should come to you and ask why I hadn't won it."

"You say Coombs offered to return the scholarship?" Surprised, Dr. Stanton stared at Bill—a trifle unpleasantly, Bill thought.

"Yes sir. He stopped me on the campus yesterday and said he thought I ought to have got the scholarship. He said I was a better athlete and a better student than he was."

"Do you agree with him?" Bill's doubt vanished; the stare *was* unpleasant.

"You're putting me in an uncomfortable position," said Bill, angered by the president's tactics. "I do play better football than Harry does, but I

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ought to; I've had lots more experience. I don't know whether I'm a better student or not but I get better grades."

"Granted." Dr. Stanton had slipped off his urbane manner as easily as he would have shaken a cape off his broad shoulders. "Unfortunately for you, however, Mr. Royce, the committee doesn't depend entirely on grades. Unless I have been misinformed, Coombs is leading in several activities, and you confine yourself strictly to your studies."

"Yes, sir, I do. That's what I came to college for."

"An admirable purpose, and I should be the last to criticize you for it. Since Coombs, however, is several years younger than you, and since he devotes a great deal of his time to the interests of the college, it is not particularly surprising, is it, that his grades are inferior to yours?"

Bill was on the defensive and he didn't know why he was there. Dr. Stanton had said nothing untrue or unfair, but somehow the facts had been warped to suggest something that was neither true nor fair.

"It seems to me, sir," Bill said slowly, "that you're putting activities before scholarship. I

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came to college to learn as much as I can, and I can't do justice to my studies if I give a lot of my time to activities. I don't think the college has a right to demand that I should."

"It hasn't," agreed Dr. Stanton quickly; "but Mr. Hurlbut made clear that he wished the scholarship given to a representative Raleigh man, and the committee did not feel that you were such a man."

"Why not?" Angered, Bill ignored the importance of the man opposite him and snapped out his words.

The answer followed quick on the heels of the question, and it was given as if Dr. Stanton were expressing something undebatable, such as a fundamental law of nature. "Because," he said, "you are lacking in *esprit de corps*."

No assertion could have aroused Bill more. "I don't know what you mean," he objected a trifle pugnaciously. "I heard that I lacked *esprit de corps* on the football team, but I dare any one to prove it. I do what the coach and quarterback tell me to do. I never ask to be allowed to carry the ball."

Dr. Stanton looked at Bill a full minute before he spoke, and when he did, his words were slow

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and measured. "I believe you. Indeed, I think you might have won the scholarship if you ever did plead to carry the ball. You play brilliantly, but you don't play for your class or your college. You are asking something of Raleigh, Mr. Royce, but I don't think you are willing to give much to her."

Bill's face was flaming. He felt that Dr. Stanton was either a hypocrite or unfit for his position—and he was too smooth. He managed to make even Bill's football playing something shameful.

"I don't think I understand you, Dr. Stanton," he said carefully, trying hard to maintain an attitude of respect. "I've worked hard to come to college; I'm working hard now and I want to get all I can. I'll be twenty-six when I graduate. I haven't time for these games you call activities. I want to learn something. I've paid my tuition. I don't see that I owe the college anything else."

"It's just because you don't see that, Mr. Royce, that you didn't get the scholarship," said the president calmly. "Incidentally, if you must reduce college to something bought and paid for, I must explain that the college is spending a little over two hundred dollars a year more on you than your tuition. I don't think the college owes you

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anything—certainly not more than it is giving you.” He rose and added significantly, “Your alma mater, Mr. Royce, is generous to those who love her, but to those who have come only to buy her merchandise, she has only merchandise to offer.”

Bill rose too and his head snapped up proudly. “It’s only her merchandise, sir, that I want. I shall not ask for a scholarship again.”

Bill left the office in a rage, and the rage stayed with him for weeks. So this was college, this was an institution of “higher learning”—this place where even the president honored football and a comic magazine and class offices above learning, this place where the president slopped over with sentimental goo about loyalty to alma mater. Well, he’d learned something about Raleigh College. He had—something that made him hard and bitter. He had learned something else, however, that made his heart warm; he’d learned what a “damned decent, white kid” Harry Coombs was. “I’m glad he got the scholarship,” he thought finally, “but he didn’t deserve it either. He’s no more a ‘representative Raleigh man’ than a pig is. He’s a damn sight bigger—thank God!”

CHAPTER V

ONE other incident in Bill's freshman year served to intensify his contempt for undergraduate honors. In itself, it was a little thing, but combined with what had preceded, it took on a significance which Bill could not ignore. At the end of the year, the elections to Tau Pi, the sophomore honor society, were announced, and the absence of Bill's name on the list focused the eye of the campus on him as nothing else had done. The insult was too obviously deliberate, too openly intended, to be ignored. More than half the football team had been elected. So had three men whose only importance was the powerful fraternities they had joined.

"The fraternities were out to 'get' him," said the non-fraternity men, but their accusation would have carried more weight if two non-fraternity men had not received Tau Pi keys. "If he wouldn't be class president, he wouldn't go Tau Pi," said others, and didn't more than half believe what they said. Still others announced

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frankly that "Royce had got just what was coming to him," and most of the undergraduates adopted that attitude.

It was true that Bill would have declined the key if it had been offered to him, and it was equally true that the fraternities had opposed his election, but he believed that his own unpopularity was really responsible for the slight, and the belief cut deep. He was disliked and he wasn't used to being disliked. In high school, in business, and in club athletics he had always been popular. Now every hand was turned against him. And why? he argued. Simply because he had come to college to study and insisted on studying. There were plenty of freshmen who made no attempt to be "active in activities" and who were not boiled in the oil of contempt for their indifference. They went quietly about their affairs, did their work, studied or played, made friends—in brief, did just as they pleased and nobody censured them. Bill, however, could not slip comfortably back into the shadows of mediocrity. He was an athlete, a brilliant star in the collegiate heavens, and no amount of wishing could produce a cloud large enough to hide his light. He had to be one of a galaxy, and if he wouldn't be, he had to shine,

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anyhow. The undergraduates would have loved him if he would have let them; since he wouldn't let them, they hated him.

Bill couldn't understand the attitude, and he was hurt. If Tau Pi had offered him membership, he would have declined it as a waste of time, a fact which the members of Tau Pi had guessed, but Bill found that if the offer of the key meant little, the lack of an offer meant a great deal. The withholding of it was the symbol of his unpopularity; it was a public slap in the face, an open declaration of hostility and superiority. He didn't want undergraduate honors, nor did he want the cheap triumph of declining them, but he didn't want either to be made a conspicuous target for undergraduate contempt. He didn't say, "I'll make them like me." Instead he said, "They can all go to hell," because that was his way. He had set up his standard and he would fight until it fell because he believed in what it stood for, but he was lonely. He despised the honor which had not been offered him, but he felt the sting of the insult, since he was sure that an insult had been intended. He said nothing to anybody; he walked alone, outwardly serene, his head high. When he met people he knew, he greeted them pleasantly

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and went on. "To hell with them," he thought over and over again, mentally throwing down the gauntlet to the whole college; "to hell with the whole damned lot . . ."

In May he had the pleasure of openly throwing down the gauntlet to the administration. In response to a note from the dean, he called on him, wondering vaguely what was wrong.

"I wish you'd tell me, Mr. Royce," the dean said courteously, "why you haven't made an application for a scholarship."

"I never thought of it," Bill replied, feeling a quick desire to fight at the mere mention of a scholarship.

The dean smiled. "You *are* an unusual undergraduate. I'd heard that you were, and now I see I was rightly informed. Most students who are working their way think constantly of scholarships, and I can't say I blame them. We have one for one hundred and fifty dollars left over. That's not much, I know, but it will help. Several men applied for it, but their records were not up to the requirements. Yours are. In fact, if you had applied earlier you might have got one that was a great deal larger."

Bill's eyes narrowed and his firm lips tightened.

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The offer made him angry; he felt insulted. Some trick was being played.

"Did President Stanton tell you to offer me the scholarship?" he asked warily.

"Why, no. The president doesn't have anything to do with matters of this sort. They're my province. Why do you ask?"

Bill rose. "The president told me a while back that I wasn't the kind of man the college wanted to help—not with scholarships, I mean. He said I wasn't representative enough. I think he's right. It's kind of you to think of me, but I couldn't think of accepting anything but instruction from the college. The president made it plain that that was all that was coming to me. I can make my own way and I don't want anything I haven't earned." He bowed slightly, murmured, "Thank you," and left the room.

Then he cut a class and took a long walk. He was afire with anger, and not even the satisfaction of having metaphorically thrown the scholarship back in the dean's face calmed him. The mere offer of it was an insult, he felt—something deliberately nasty. He happened to be wrong, but he had reason only to feel that he was right. The college, from the president and dean down to the

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most insignificant freshman, seemed determined to make him as unhappy as possible. Well, he was going to stay right where he was and get what he had come for. If he had to purchase popularity by going through the silly fraternity mummary and back-slapping and card playing, and waste his time sitting up half the night blah-ing with a bunch of fool kids about sex and religion and believing in a lot of hooey about dying for the dear old college—well, if he had to go rah-rah to be popular, he was damned well off unpopular.

He began his sophomore year disillusioned and bitter. His first inclination had been to forget football altogether, but he liked the game too much to give it up entirely. Foolishly, he thought Sam Ross would let him play on the scrubs. So long as he wasn't on the team, he would escape the intense training grind, and he had no intention of attending "skull" practice in the evenings. When Ross snatched the cigarette out of his mouth, he decided instantly to find his exercise somewhere other than on the football field. He needed twenty-five dollars a week too much, however, to decline it, although he did decide by the middle of the season that he was being poorly

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paid when he reckoned up the hours and energy demanded of him.

He was forced to study football harder and for more hours than he was permitted to study anything else. Often, indeed, he was too tired to study anything else. Every other week during the season he had to give three days at least when the team traveled to other colleges to play; once five days were taken—four days of travel for a football game. He was dragged to rallies and exhibited to cheering, hysterical undergraduates. Twice he had to make speeches and assure the “loyal men and true” that the team would fight. Each time he thought, “Fight? Hell, I thought we were supposed to *play*.” He knew well enough that the fun of football came in the fight, but it wasn’t that kind of fight the undergraduates were shouting for. He kept a straight face, nevertheless, and made his little speech. It was part of the job for which he was receiving pay. At times he thought a broken ankle would be a blessing, and once in a game when he felt an opponent twisting it viciously under a pile of men, he actually hoped for an instant it would snap. He didn’t know that he could hate football so much, and he hated it more when he accidentally over-

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heard a couple of his teammates discussing his play.

"Bill's got the stuff," said one, "but I don't like to play with him."

"I don't either," said the other, a half-back. "He's there all right—he's got us all stopped—but he sort of takes the pep out of you."

"That's it! He plays like a machine. He's the best interference man on the team, but—but—I don't know how to say it, he ——"

"He runs ahead of you but not *with* you," explained the half-back. "He gets his man every time but somehow he doesn't help *you*. He just does it because it's his job to. That's it exactly; he plays as if he were paid to do it."

His friend laughed and said, "I've heard he is. He sure doesn't care a hoot about the team."

Bill longed to break into that conversation and explain just why he played football, but he was wise enough to refrain. He wanted to explain that he hated the game, and he honestly believed in his hate. Yet he thought about football far more than he realized, and it was through that thinking that he gained his first friend.

He had always had a tender feeling for Harry Coombs ever since the boy had offered to return the

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Morgan Hurlbut Scholarship, and he was glad when he saw his chance to do him a good turn.

Harry had played half-back successfully on the freshman team, but he proved too light for the position on the varsity; so most of the time he either played on the scrubs or sat on the side lines. Bill thought a good man was being wasted and decided to say so.

He found Sam Ross in his office in the gymnasium.

"Sam," he began, "I want to make a suggestion about the team if you don't mind."

Ross looked surprised at Bill's unexpected show of interest, but he said he'd be glad to get any kind of suggestion. "The team's not right," he admitted, "and I don't know what to do about it."

Bill sat down on the edge of the desk and said, "I think I do. Maybe I'm wrong, but if I am, no harm's done. It's the quarter and right end that's worrying you, isn't it?"

"Yes. Curl's too slow for end and Morton can't run the team. He'd make a swell half-back, but you and Jim can take care of that. What's your idea?"

"Wouldn't Morton make a good end?" Bill

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asked. "He's twice as fast as Curl and he can handle passes."

"Sure he would. I've thought of that myself—but what am I going to do for a quarter?"

"Train Harry Coombs for the job. He's too light for half, but he'd make a crack quarter or I'll eat my hat. He's fast, he can pass, and he thinks like a streak. I played with him last year and I know. He thinks better than he plays."

Ross slapped the desk and jumped to his feet in his excitement. "I believe you're right!" he cried. "Of course, you're right. What a fool I was not to think of that! We'll try it. Thanks, Bill."

He thanked Bill at length, but Bill wasn't much interested in Ross's gratitude. He liked to play on a good team, and he wanted Harry Coombs to make his letter because he knew that letter would be a cross of gold to Harry.

The plan was tried out and within two weeks Harry had made his place at quarter-back. And at the end of a successful season he came to call on Bill. The call was the beginning of a friendship the campus could not understand. Neither, for that matter, could Bill; yet above all things he treasured that friendship.

CHAPTER VI

BILL had been surprised to find Harry at his door that night. No one ever knocked at Bill's door unless it was a student vending banners or selling chances in some sort of lottery.

"Why, hello, Harry," Bill said cordially. "Come in."

"Are you awfully busy?" Harry asked timidly, his cheeks flushing a little as he gazed curiously about the barren little room. There was a cot, a small cheap desk with an equally cheap chair before it, an old rocker, and a well-worn morris chair. There was a cold-looking grass rug on the floor, and three pictures on the wall: a photograph of Discobolus, a sepia print of Botticelli's "Primavera," and a small etching. The pictures had belonged to Bill's mother. Everything else he had sold to pay the bills, but those he had saved. Her picture was on his desk, but there wasn't a single photograph of a girl in the room, nor was there a banner. Only the pictures and a

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couple of dozen books piled in a window-seat broke the monklike severity of Bill's cell.

"Sure, I'm busy," Bill replied cheerfully to Harry's question. "I'm trying to make up some of the time I lost playing football. I've got time to see you, though. Don't stand there like a goof. Come on in."

There wasn't another man on the campus whom Bill would have welcomed so cordially, but he could not be suspicious of Harry. There was no duplicity in the boy, and he had already proved his straightforwardness and kindly generosity.

"I don't want to bother you," he demurred, hesitating in the doorway.

Bill laughed, caught him by the shoulder, pulled him into the room, and slammed the door behind him. "Come in, you idiot," he commanded, "and stop apologizing." He shoved Harry into the morris chair, and added, "Now sit there and speak your piece. What's on your mind?"

Harry's homely face broke into a relieved grin, and his blue eyes smiled up at Bill.

"I always knew you were a good scout," he said shyly.

Bill blushed as if he had been caught stealing

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a widow's mite. "Go to hell, you damn fool!" he growled fiercely and threw himself into the rocking chair.

His embarrassment put Harry at ease and he laughed. "Gee, Bill," he said, chuckling, "you look mad as the devil."

"Well, who wouldn't be? I'm normally civil to you, and you act as if I'd bought a beautiful Christian maiden for your harem." Bill tried to scowl to hide his confusion, failed pitifully, and broke into a hearty laugh. "You're a fool and so am I," he said with blunt good humor. "Come on, Harry; spill the dirt. What's roiling up your mind?" He rose, offered Harry a cigarette, took one from the package for himself, lighted both, and then threw himself at full length on the couch. "Shoot!" he commanded.

"Don't cigarettes taste good again?" Harry asked, inhaling deeply. "That's the worst thing about football—no cigarettes, I mean. I'm glad the season's over." He hesitated, settled one heel on the floor and wriggled the foot industriously while he watched his pedal performance apparently fascinated, opened his mouth, closed it, and then blushing as he always did when ever

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so slightly embarrassed, blurted suddenly, "I want to thank you for what you did for me."

"Did for you?" Bill propped himself up on one elbow and, puzzled, stared at Harry. "I've never done anything for you—not that I wouldn't like to all right, but I haven't. What sort of fool notion have you got in your head now?"

Harry's embarrassment died in the earnestness of his denial. "Yes, you did," he contradicted vehemently. "You did a lot. I wouldn't have made my letter if it hadn't been for you. Sam told me how you got him to make me quarter. Yeah," he added hastily as Bill tried to interrupt, "and I knew you were helping me all the time. You acted like you were just thinking signals out loud or something, but I knew you were giving me tips at first. I—I've been wanting to say something for a long time, and I'm going to say it now—if—if ——"

"You aren't going to say one damn thing," Bill broke in, sitting determinedly erect, "or I'll knock your sentimental block off. We had a rotten team and I saw a way to better it; that's all. I'm glad you made your letter, of course, but you earned it yourself, and you're a worse idiot even

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than I think you are if you think I had anything to do with it."

Harry smiled at Bill's vehemence. He was very young, very ingenuous in many ways, but he wasn't a fool. "Have it your way, Bill," he said, exhibiting his white, widely spaced teeth in a broad grin; "have it your way—but put me down as awfully grateful just the same." He sighed deeply and emitted a relieved exclamation that was like a puff of steam: "Gee, I feel better."

"Do you? Well, I feel worse. If it makes you feel better to climb three flights of stairs to slobber all over me, you're welcome to the relief. I feel as if you had poured a barrel of honey all over me."

Harry's head went back and he shouted with laughter.

"Gosh, Bill," he cried, "you're a bigger fake than I thought you were. I've been sort of scared of you because you're older than I am and sarcastic as the devil and all that, but I had a hunch you were regular, just the same. Now I know you are."

"I'm not!" Harry's eyes opened wide in surprise. He couldn't doubt that Bill meant his denial. "I'm not regular, and, God help me, I

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never will be. A regular fellow around this college is about the stupidest, dullest, gin-swilling conformist God ever made. He comes to college to drink and dance and pet and bull and make an idiot of himself at football games. If I ever turn regular, I hope somebody strikes me dead."

His anger was not assumed; the word "regular" had been a spark touched to the powder of his resentment. The resultant explosion was as sincere as it was spontaneous. His irregularity had brought him so much unhappiness that he had to treasure it or lose his self-respect. He had given up friendship for his faith in his irregularity, he had suffered loneliness and pain for it, and the suggestion that it was only a pose stung like a whip.

"I didn't mean that," said Harry, undisturbed by Bill's anger, "but it doesn't matter. You're not regular that way, I know. I guess I'm not regular either. But never mind that. I've got to go in a minute and I want to ask a favor of you."

"Shoot," said Bill, relaxing on the couch. He understood what Harry meant and was mollified. "I guess I can do it."

"You can all right, but I'm not sure you'll want

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to. It's this way, Bill. I've got a cousin who's coming to our house dance next week. She's awfully good looking and I guess she's clever; anyway, she's a swell dancer and most fellows are crazy about her. Well, I thought my girl couldn't come and I asked Pat—and now Celia's coming and Pat too. I want ——”

“Pat?” asked Bill, puzzled.

“Sure—short for Patricia. All the fellows at the house have girls already; so I'd be awfully grateful if you'd come to the dance as my guest, you know, and take Pat off my hands.”

“Sorry, Harry,” Bill declined firmly, “but I can't do it. I like to dance and I guess I could rake up a tux—anyhow, I'm thinking of buying one, but I've sworn off women. If this Pat is the knock-out you say she is, I'd probably fall in love with her and flunk six of my five courses. I'd be glad to help you out of 'most any kind of fix but this kind. Honest, Harry, I wouldn't dare look at any good-looking woman. I'm ripe right now to fall.” Bill couldn't have been more earnest if he had been eighteen instead of twenty-three. Harry's invitation actually frightened him.

“That's not it,” contradicted Harry. “You

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just don't want to come around to the house. You think I'm trying to rush you."

"No, I don't. You wouldn't try to be subtle with me; I know that. No, I give you my word, it's just that I'm afraid. When I get to thinking about a girl, I'm just shot; I can't think of anything else—and I've got to study. Get somebody who can take his women in his stride. I always trip."

Harry got up and stretched largely. As Bill had lost his poise, he had gained his. "You're full of boloney," he said lightly. "I'm going out now and telegraph Pat that you're crazy to meet her and that you're going to be her boy friend at the dance. She won't get here until six; so you won't have a thing to do but show up at the house looking pretty about nine o'clock next Friday night." He sauntered casually to the door, feeling master of the situation and very much pleased with himself.

"But, Harry," Bill cried protestingly. He leaped to his feet. "I ——"

"Her whole name's Patricia Roberts," Harry announced, grinning proudly. He opened the door and closed it behind him. A second later it opened again and his blond head suddenly ap-

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peared. "Pat for short," he called. The head vanished, the door slammed, and Bill slumped back weakly on the couch.

"Sunk," he thought morosely; "I bet anything I get sunk."

He was distressed, actually frightened. He gathered up an armful of books, threw them on the couch, sat down on the window seat, and gazed mournfully at the deserted campus. A few minutes later he went back to the morris chair and his book, but he could not study. At first he thought that worry was distracting his attention from his work, but then he knew that the worry had died almost the instant it was born. He wasn't worried; he was eager. There was new life in him, a curious gladness that thrilled him through and through. He wasn't thinking of the girl. The thought of her had vanished with the worry she had aroused. He was thinking of Harry. God! it had been good to have somebody in the room, somebody who laughed at him and with him, somebody who razzed him and treated him disrespectfully; it was good—oh, damn good. He hadn't known how lonely he was, how hungry for companionship, for a friend.

CHAPTER VII

WHEN Friday night arrived, Bill had the new tuxedo and a new surge of fear, a glorious feeling of anticipation, and a sense of guilt.

"I oughtn't to be doing this," he thought as he dressed. "If I start this business, I won't want to stop it. Plenty of time for dances and women after I graduate. . . ."

When he met Patricia Roberts, however, his conscience went to sleep without even one final little gasp of protest. Patricia justified herself. Bill had no reason to make excuses to his conscience for anything which might happen.

To his great relief, she was tall. He had a horror of little women. They made him feel clumsy. One glance at a number three slipper stretched his own feet into monstrosities and thickened his hands until they became unwieldy hams awkwardly attached to thick, unhinged wrists. Patricia only made him glad of his size, and she had a straightforwardness which scorned

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small talk, an art at which he hardly considered himself a master.

"I'm glad to meet you," she said when Harry presented Bill to her, "and I'm grateful to you, too. I wanted to come to this dance. I don't know why, but I did. You had courage to take a blind date."

"No, I didn't either," Bill admitted, laughing. "I said no when Harry asked me—and I've never said yes. He just went ahead and made arrangements, anyhow."

"Well, I'm glad he did—and for a wonder he had sense enough to get somebody my size. I was afraid he'd capture a cute little freshman for me, and they always make me feel six feet five instead of five feet six. You're big and you look as if you might have brains." Her voice was a rich contralto, and its velvety smoothness touched Bill's bruised spirit like soothing music.

He smiled and said he couldn't guarantee the brains but that he could vouch for the pleasure; then feeling that he had got over the introduction far better than he had hoped for, he suggested that they dance.

Both of them danced well, Patricia because she was experienced and graceful, and Bill because

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he had the sure rhythmic sense of the true athlete. He might feel awkward occasionally but he seldom was; he moved in rhythm as naturally as he breathed, and as Patricia moved expertly in rhythm with him, he felt the truest thrill of pleasure he had experienced since he entered college. He met other girls as the evening wore on, but he always sought Patricia whenever he could without being rude. He liked to dance with her, he liked to talk to her, and, best of all, he liked to look at her.

She was beautiful, he decided—not pretty, beautiful. She wasn't the flapper type at all; her poise came from dignity, not youthful cocksureness. She could have worn a tiara, and a train would have seemed only fitting. Both her hair and eyes were black, but her hair, thick and sleek, shone like lacquer and her eyes were soft. Bill would have thought she was Italian if her skin hadn't been so startlingly white. In a bright light he discovered that the red in her cheeks was natural and that the slender arched eyebrows had not been plucked. Her nose was high, slightly aquiline—proud, proud as her red mouth or direct glance. She was a new type to Bill and he was fascinated.

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Late in the evening she asked him to take her for a walk. "I've danced with three men," she said, "who smell of liquor and I need fresh air."

Glad to get out of the noise, Bill hurried for his overcoat. A minute later she met him and held out a velvet wrap trimmed with brown fur.

"Will this be warm enough?" she asked.

"I think so. It's pretty warm tonight."

They left the fraternity house and strolled down the hill to the river, exchanging casual remarks which meant nothing. The river looked like liquid silver in the moonlight, and the trees on the opposite shore were blackly mysterious. Somewhere a bird cheeped. They sat down on a log. Bill was thinking about the bird. It ought to have gone south long ago. He wondered what kind it was.

Patricia was thinking about Bill. She was afraid of him, and she had never been afraid of a man before. She didn't know quite why she was so frightened. He had said nothing, done nothing, which could possibly disturb her, but as he moved slightly and his arm touched hers, she shivered. She was facing some kind of new and thrilling danger. Too proud to run from it, she courted it instead. She spoke softly.

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"What?" Bill said. "What did you say?"

"I asked if you were going to kiss me." Her question startled her almost as much as it did him. She had said it twice, but it was as unexpected and terrifying as a flash of lightning—yet her voice was calm. She wondered why she hadn't shrieked.

"I'd like to," Bill said, showing his surprise openly, "but I didn't think you'd let me." He looked at her face, so white in the vague light, but still regal, still proud.

"Is that what you were so silent about? Were you wondering if I would let you?" She thought some devil must be controlling her tongue. Certainly she hadn't meant to ask those questions.

"No," he confessed; "I was wondering why that bird hadn't gone south. I'm wondering now, though. Do you ——" He broke off, and in the darkness he flushed. He couldn't be that blunt, and yet he was curious. Did she ask every man to kiss her? If she did, he would kiss her and with pleasure—then he'd forget her.

"Do I always ask that?" she finished for him. Her voice remained as smooth and cool as silk, and its quality surprised her more than it did him. "No. I've never asked it before. You didn't try to kiss me, and so I was curious; that's all." She

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heard the words as if they had been spoken by another person. Shocked by the lie, she struggled to gain possession of her own mind. She hated this second personality which was controlling her tongue, and she struggled with it.

Bill was confused. If this was "technique," it was new to him and he had seen many kinds. If it wasn't technique, he didn't know his cue. He hesitated, and before he could say anything, she spoke—and this time she ordered the words herself; they were the words she chose to say.

"I like you," she explained quietly; "I like you very much. You're more mature than most fellows and you haven't a line; at least, you haven't exhibited it to me. You're very handsome—I mean you're big without looking like a brute. You're not pretty; you're strong—and I think there's beauty in strength. That's why I think you're handsome. You dance beautifully, and I have an idea you're intelligent. Harry adores you. He's not very keen, but he's not a fool either. He's idealistic and he wouldn't like you if you were cheap."

Bill wondered what all this had to do with kissing. He couldn't know that Patricia was analyz-

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ing her own thoughts, justifying her own emotions.

"Wait a minute," he said earnestly, turning toward her. "I don't think I'm cheap, but I'm not everything Harry thinks I am, either. He's at the hero-worship age, you know, and he probably plasters me with all the virtues I haven't got."

"I suppose you mean," she said, the devil controlling her tongue again, "that you aren't chaste."

If she had slapped him, Bill would not have been more surprised, more utterly dumfounded. The conversation had taken a turn that he hadn't intended it should, and he didn't know what to do about it. This directness was new to him, and he didn't know whether it was caused by natural honesty or unnatural curiosity. Besides, he didn't want to talk to her just then; he wanted to kiss her. He was starved for kisses—at least, he felt starved at just that moment. He didn't want to talk; he wanted to hold her, but if there must be conversation, he would like, he felt, to have a little control of it.

"No," he said slowly, fumbling for a safe reply, "I didn't mean that—though I don't happen to be, if that matters."

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"It doesn't at all. I wasn't curious. I just took it for granted you weren't, and such things as chastity mean a lot to Harry; so I supposed you were referring to that when you said he made you nobler than you were." She was telling the truth and she managed to retain an impersonal attitude and tone, but underneath she was shaken by her own frankness. She hadn't been curious about his chastity. What had ever possessed her to mention it?

Bill was sure that she was younger than he was, but her poise, her suggested sophistication made him feel awkward and naïve. It gradually dawned on him that much as he wanted to kiss her, he was afraid to, and the recognition of his fear surprised him so much that he forgot their topic of conversation. He'd never been afraid with a girl before—hesitant, perhaps, but never afraid.

"You're an extraordinary person," he said, trying an offensive. "I've never met any girl like you."

"That's the first banal thing you've said," she remarked quietly, drawing her fur collar close around her throat. He noticed how white and slender her hands were, how queenly the poise

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of her head, and he noticed once more how her soft voice seemed to caress her words. In themselves, they were sharp, but her voice and her casual manner dulled their edge. They did not hurt him.

"I don't think I was banal," he objected. "At least, your strangeness isn't banal to me; it's new and exciting. You're too exciting. I'm glad I know you—but I wish I didn't. You're going to worry me, and I don't want to be worried. I want to study."

His honesty routed her devil. She was completely in possession of her own mind as she turned to look at him. Then her glance shifted and she stared pensively at the silvery river. At last she spoke, and her voice was thoughtfully vague:

"I think I want you to worry about me—and I haven't wanted anybody to since I was a freshman. You interest me. No, that's not—yes, it is too. You *do* interest me, but that's not really it; you attract me. I want you to kiss me—and I'm not going to let you."

Bill turned toward her eagerly. "Why not?" he demanded. "I want to. I want to awfully. Why not?"

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"Just because I want you to so much. Listen." She looked straight into his eyes and said frankly, "This desire to have somebody hold me and kiss me is new and I don't trust it. It frightens me. I'm not given to petting. I don't want to be treated casually and I'm a physical snob; at any rate, I shrink from the very thought of being touched by most men. I like you. Maybe I'm falling in love with you. I don't know, but I can't let you take me casually. Please don't touch me. You could make me kiss you, I think—and so I'm afraid."

Bill rose to his feet and looked down at her for a full minute before replying. "You've put me on my honor, haven't you?" he said at last. "Well, I'll play fair. I'll take you at your word. I want to kiss you all right; make no mistake about that. I want to kiss you more than you want me to. But don't think I could take you casually. Nobody could do that."

She laughed and rose too. "They have—at least, plenty have tried to. Let's go back. I'm getting cold, and Harry will think I've got you into some kind of trouble. You can do no wrong, you know, but I'm only his cousin; I could do almost anything."

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They strolled back slowly to the fraternity house and she told him something about herself. She had graduated six months before from Smith College, she was twenty-two, she lived in Larchmont, New York, and she had just returned from five months in Europe.

"I've been studying music," she said, "not because I can ever be a musician but because I have to do something until I can capture a husband. Harry says you're working your way through college; so don't make me fall in love with you. I've been brought up expensively." She tried to be light, but her flippancy lacked sparkle. She was ashamed of it.

They were approaching the fraternity house and Bill paused. "Wait!" he commanded. "I want to say something." She stopped beside him. "I'm not going to make you fall in love with me," he said earnestly, "and I'm going to do my damndest not to fall in love with you." His voice grew husky and it trembled a little. "I'm afraid I've fallen already. I've been nearly crazy all evening—first all excited and then as if I were in a dream. I'm nearly crazy right now. If I hadn't promised I wouldn't kiss you, I'd do it now—nothing could stop me, nothing! You're

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the most wonderful girl I've ever met. You're strange and tantalizing—and you're beautiful. Play fair with me—please.”

She held out her hand, and, surprised, he took it in his own. Her touch made him weak, a little dizzy. He had to fight to listen to what she was saying.

“I'll play fair,” she promised softly, and her voice trembled a little, too. “If I'm in love with you, I'll try to get you—but I'll be fair about it.” She pressed his hand. The college clock struck twice. “It's two o'clock. Take me back and say good night. I'm leaving in the morning. You'd better not see me again.”

Bill said that he wouldn't, but the next morning he cut a class and hid behind a tree near the station. Daylight did not dispel his dream. She was still lovely, still queenly, though she looked younger in her big coat and severe hat than she had in a flame-colored evening gown. He watched Harry put her on the train and then turned away. He felt weak, as washed out as if he had been on a big spree. A comet had swept past him, caught him up for a moment and carried him along in its glory, and then passed on, leaving

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him spent and alone. Its light had dazzled him, but the day was darker because the light had gone.

Slowly he climbed the hill back to the campus. His books were waiting for him and they had turned to dust. A week before the deeds and ideas and dreams of great men had thrilled him; now they were less than nothing. He had a dream of his own and he had to sacrifice it for their dreams. They were dead, and their books were like clammy claws holding him back from his own life. For them he had let Patricia go.

He reached his room and threw himself down wearily on his couch. For an hour he lay there damning himself and damning college. Then the bell startled him out of his reverie. He had a twelve o'clock class. He picked up his notebook and then hesitated. There was a twelve-thirty train. He could see Patricia that night.

Slowly, unhappily, he shook his head. No—no, he had to play fair; he'd promised—and he had to stick to his job. Then, squaring his jaw and tightening his lips, he left the room.

CHAPTER VIII

FOR a week Bill struggled. He was possessed by the thought of Patricia. She walked with him to classes, stayed with him while the professors lectured, accompanied him on long strolls far out into the country; she stepped on the pages of the books he studied and drowned the print in the vision of her loveliness; he went to sleep thinking of her and woke up with her image in his mind and her name on his lips. He struggled to rid himself of her, partly because he could not study while the memory of her bedeviled him, and partly because he did not trust his own emotion; this was not the first time he had been swirled up to the clouds by a girl. The sooner he forgot Patricia, he decided, the better off he would be.

He didn't forget her the second week, but he found that he could study again. His books began to take on meaning, the lectures were no longer a vague drone of words, the dreadful tight feeling of nervous intensity relaxed. Christmas vacation came and he stayed at college to make up the

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time he had lost; besides, he had no place to go. He had spent the preceding Christmas with a maiden aunt, but she had not invited him again and he was glad that she hadn't. He didn't like her very much. There were people at home who would welcome him, but no one thought to send him an invitation and he was much too proud to hint to any one that he might be lonely. For the first few days he studied hard, and when the deserted dormitory became unbearably quiet, he put on stout boots and a sheep-lined jacket and plowed for miles through the snow, letting himself think of Patricia. She became to him the reward of good work. If he felt that he had spent his time well and had accomplished something, he gave himself over to dreams of her; but if she intruded on his studying, he shut her resolutely out of his mind and felt somehow that he was punishing her as well as himself.

There is nothing more dismal than a college dormitory during vacation, and it takes a man of unflinching cheerfulness to stay in one alone. Bill had looked forward to the quiet and found that he hated it. When he walked down the halls or climbed the stairs, his footsteps seemed to echo in every empty room. The building wasn't just

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empty; it was dead. It was as depressing as a deserted farmhouse or a tomb. Ever since his mother's death, Bill had been lonely, but he was too busy and healthy and young to give way to his loneliness. Now it took him at a disadvantage; it crept up on him from every corner in the silent dormitory, it trailed him when he went walking, it was waiting for him when he returned.

Christmas Day was a nightmare. A card came from Harry Coombs and from five people at home; otherwise there was nothing to remind him that the day was unlike any other day. He ate his Christmas dinner at a cafeteria and paid forty-three cents for it. He could afford to pay more, but he didn't want food; he wanted friends, he wanted relatives, he wanted a home. Morbidly he thought of the dinners the other students were having—and left his pie untouched; it stuck in his throat before he had tasted it.

He went back to his room and thought of his mother. He tried to summon Patricia to make him happy, but for once she would not come. No; she couldn't be there with him in that dark, dreary dormitory; she was at home with her family looking at her cards—scores of cards, her beautiful presents; she was having dinner—turkey with

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chestnut dressing and mince pie and plum pudding; there were people around, so many people who loved her that she had no time for him. Nobody had ever had time for him, anyhow, except his mother. They all wanted something from him; they wanted him to work for them or play football for them or—oh, it didn't make any difference what they wanted, they just didn't want *him*.

Not one fellow had asked him home for the vacation. Harry Coombs would have if he had given him a chance, but he told Harry before he could ask that he had to stay at college and study. Harry was poor and couldn't afford a guest. Funny that he should have a rich relative like Patricia.

Patricia. . . . He couldn't be in love with her. He'd forgotten her already. Well, he was glad. If he couldn't think of her when he wanted to so badly, she wouldn't disturb him any more. And because he was so glad that she wouldn't disturb him, he lowered his head to his arms and shivered. God, he was lonely. . . . His mother was dead and Patricia had died, too—died in his memory. There was nobody—nobody. . . . He was alone. Oh, God, he was lonely! . . .

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The day was dark, dismal with dull gray skies. A few flakes began to fall. Bill lifted his head and looked out the window. Through the curtain of snow he could see hundreds of windows in other dormitories. It was getting dark and lights ought to begin to flash in them. How cheerful and homey dormitories always looked in a snowstorm with all their windows gay and bright with yellow light! Now the windows stayed dark—blank, cold, eyeless-looking expanses in the brick walls. A townsman walked across the campus, his hands thrust into his overcoat pockets, his head bent forward into the storm. No one else was in sight. The snow thickened, bringing night with it from the leadish black clouds. Church bells tolled for vespers.

Bill turned back to the room. Nothing but shadows—dark, cold, gloomy shadows. "God!" he cried aloud. "*God!*" Then he fell flat on the couch and his big body twisted and turned. The college boys did not know it, but they had their revenge.

An hour later Bill lifted himself from the couch, listlessly pulled on his boots and heavy jacket, and clumped slowly downstairs and out into the storm. He went downtown to the cafe-

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teria, bought a couple of sandwiches, stuffed them into his pocket, and then aimlessly wandered out of the village. It was midnight when he returned. He was so cold that he could barely walk, so cold, indeed, that his little room seemed warm and cheerful, a bright haven instead of a dark cell. He wasn't happy, but it was more than the cold that made his cheeks red and his eyes bright. He had his courage back again. He was seeing beyond Christmas, beyond the empty dormitory, the unfriendly students, beyond even Patricia. He had two years and a half more of college. Then he'd made a home and a place for himself. He'd show 'em!

The blue moods descended upon him many times before the vacation was over, but he always shook them off resolutely and went back to work. He had something to do—and, by heaven, come hell or high water, he would do it! He studied and never knew that he was listening for something—listening and listening. He did not know how tensely he had been waiting for a sound until he heard it, and then it gave him such a shock of joy that for a moment he trembled. It was the step of the first returning student that he had been listening for, and following that step came

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dozens more. Feet pounded down the halls, up and down the stairs; there was laughter and joyous chatter, noisy welcomes, snatches of shouted confidences. "Swell party—got stiff to the ears! . . ." "Boy! that babe. . . ." "Got a Buick roadster and . . ." On and on. The dormitory trembled with noise; it was rampant with life, it was reborn.

And Bill felt lonelier than ever. Nobody exchanged confidences with him, nobody asked him if he had had a swell time, nobody yelled his name up three flights of stairs or howled at his window, nobody—

But somebody did. There was a bang on the door, it swung open, and Harry Coombs burst into the room, his straight blond hair tangled from the high wind which was blowing outside, his blue eyes shining, his big mouth stretched wide in a grin.

"Hel-lo, Bill!" he shouted, holding out his hand. "Gee, it's sure good to see you!"

Bill leaped out of his chair and grasped Harry's hand so fiercely that the knuckles cracked.

"Hello, Harry!" he cried, all his misery fleeing before the friendliness of Harry's smile. "Boy, it's good to see you!"

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Good? It was heaven—but he couldn't tell Harry that. He couldn't tell him of the hell he had endured, that he was enduring; he couldn't tell him anything, but he didn't need to; it was enough to have him there, to have some one in his room, some one who cared about him, who wanted to talk to him, who wanted to tell him about girls and dances and sleigh rides—oh, God, it made no difference—who wanted to tell him *anything!*

They could not have talked harder or more excitedly if they had been friends for a lifetime and had been separated for years, and the excitement never left them.

"Gee!" cried Harry, suddenly; "I almost forgot. I saw Pat."

Bill's heart skipped a beat. "You did?" he asked eagerly. "How is she?"

"Great! She drove up home two days after Christmas. She wanted to know all about you. Say, Bill, she thinks you're the berries. Honestly."

"Go chase yourself," said Bill happily. "I'm not in her class and she knows it, but it makes me feel good just the same to find out that she hasn't forgotten me. She's wonderful."

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"She's a knock-out," Harry agreed, "even if she is my cousin. Say, I wish I had their cash. Her dad's a lawyer and so's mine, but Uncle Clem just piles up the dough and Dad just gets by."

"Do you write to Patricia?" Bill asked.

"Once in a while. Why?"

"Well, give her my regards when you do."

"Oh, sure—you bet."

They chattered on, and Bill went to bed happier that night than he had been since he entered college. Harry was a great kid; he certainly was—no wonder or anything like that but as fine and honest as they come. He'd bank on Harry. . . . Funny he'd have a cousin so beautiful and sophisticated when he was so homely and innocent. Well, families were queer, anyhow, and Patricia—Patricia was a queen, a regular queen. . . .

His contentment stayed with him through examinations. He forgot the college antagonism, and the college forgot him. Every one was studying. For the time being not even athletes and athletics mattered. The dormitories and fraternity houses grew tense with effort and fear. Bill wasn't afraid. He knew that he would get

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his usual quota of A's, but he was getting a deep pleasure as he went over his books in review and found how well he had learned them. He wasn't wasting his time. He was getting somewhere. In the end college would give him what he wanted. He might have to fight for it, he might have more unpleasant times, but he would get it. He managed to arrange a schedule for the second term which satisfied him; his instructors all seemed promising; he was ready to dig in and go to work.

Then Patricia came back. There had been a long thaw, a week of freezing weather; the roads were clear, and she drove to Raleigh and sent for Bill. Wild with delight and excitement, he hurried to the Inn where she was waiting for him in the lobby.

He had forgotten how beautiful she was. Her beauty burst on him as something utterly unexpected and new. She was wearing a simple black silk dress with a small tan collar that opened at her throat into a broad V. Her small black hat was pulled tight over her ears, and there was something vermilion on the side—a buckle, Bill thought.

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She smiled as he came quickly to her, his hand outstretched.

"Are you surprised?" she asked, as she placed her hand in his.

"Surprised? Why, when that kid came in with your note I nearly keeled over. I'm flabbergasted."

"I am myself." She withdrew her hand slowly from his grasp, sat down, and waited until he had dropped into the chair beside her. "You see, Aunt Martha wanted to come up to see Harry. Aunt Martha's his mother, you know—and so I was big and generous and drove her up for a day and a night. That's what she honestly thinks; but the truth is——" she turned to him and smiled—"I wanted to see you and so I fooled her into being a chaperone."

"You wanted to see me?" Bill stared at her unbelievably. He couldn't believe her, and at the same time he did believe her. He believed her because she had said it and he could doubt nothing that she said, and yet the unbelievable, no matter how glorious, was by definition unbelievable. His face was radiant, his brown eyes shining, and his lips tight in a trembling smile.

Patricia laughed. "You look so astonished and

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pleased that I'm glad I fooled Aunt Martha. She's happy with Harry, and he's happy with her, and ——"

"I'm happy with you," Bill concluded for her. "I didn't know I could be so happy. Let's not stay here, though. I want to talk. I don't know what about but I want to talk for hours. Let's go walking."

"Fine!" Patricia stood up quickly and held out her coat to him. "I hoped you'd say that, and if you hadn't, I should have." She slipped into her coat and lifted one foot. "Look," she said, "I'm wearing high shoes. I'm all ready for a long hike."

Bill took a deep breath, whispered happily, "Let's go," and started for the door. She waited at his dormitory while he got his heavy jacket, and then they began their long walk, a walk that neither would ever forget.

CHAPTER IX

AT first they strode along rapidly, turning their heads occasionally to smile at each other but saying nothing. After they had covered a couple of miles in absurd haste and strange silence, Bill stopped suddenly and said:

"I wanted to talk."

"So did I," said Patricia, laughing, "and I still do—but I was thinking."

"About what?"

"You, of course."

They walked on slowly. They had crossed a field and were entering a forest, bare and bleak looking except for an occasional evergreen. There was a good path, but Bill ignored it and turned to his left.

"So was I," he confessed—"thinking of you, I mean. We can cut through these woods and come out on the other side. The path leads to the road, but the river's through here a couple of miles and it's kind of pretty all frozen over."

"All right; I don't care where we go. Tell

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me what you were thinking and I'll tell you what I was thinking—the old kid game, you know." She smiled at him again, and with an effort he resisted the impulse to embrace her. Then he realized that he hadn't thought before of making love to her; just being with her had been enough.

"I was thinking lots of things," he said, holding a thorny branch aside for her. "I was thinking how much younger you looked than you did the night of the dance. How old are you?"

"Twenty-two."

"I thought you must be about that. Well, I was thinking you were beautiful, but that I liked you better in that coat than I did in an evening gown. You're more approachable or something—more human, I guess. And I was thinking you have the most beautiful voice I've ever heard. And—oh, Lord, it doesn't matter; I was just thinking mostly how wonderful it was to be with you."

She nodded her head and said softly, "I know; I was thinking that too." For a time they walked in silence, breaking deeper and deeper into the forest. She asked him questions about his life, made sympathetic comments, told him something of her own experiences, and somehow gave him

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the impression that she was carefully avoiding the only subject which mattered anything at all to Bill just then.

"I'm glad to know about you," she said. "I've been wondering a lot. Let's sit down here a minute." She pointed to a fallen tree, walked quickly to it, sat down, and waited until he had seated himself beside her. "Were you wondering," she asked, "why I came up here today?"

"Of course. You said to see me, but somehow I can't be quite conceited enough to believe that. I'd like to believe it but I can't." Bill was lying; he did believe it but he wanted to hear her say it again.

"Well, it's true. I didn't come because I couldn't stay away; so maybe my visit isn't as flattering as it might be. I came as a test."

"A test? What do you mean?" He looked at her, puzzled and a little displeased; he didn't entirely like the idea of being used for a laboratory experiment.

"I didn't want to test you," she explained hastily; "I wanted to test myself. I was frightened that night, dreadfully frightened—of myself, I mean. Somehow I trusted you. I don't know why but I did. I was so excited I was afraid.

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"I'd never been that way before." She paused a moment and then asked directly, "I don't believe in love at first sight, do you?"

"No," he replied candidly, "and that's why I've been through particular hell. You attract me terribly, but I've been attracted before. Half the time I think I'm in love with you, and the other half I think ——"

"I know," she interrupted nervously. "I know—but, you see, I haven't been attracted before. I've let a few men kiss me just to see if I wouldn't be thrilled, but I wasn't. Twice it was horrid." She shivered at the memories and then continued more quietly. "I wanted you to kiss me; I wanted it so hard it hurt. I was trying to protect myself and I didn't know how to. I was frightened. I am now. I came back to see if I would be—and I am. I'm sorry I came."

If she had been less preoccupied with her own fears, she would inevitably have seen that Bill had grown tense while she was speaking and that his face had paled. Speaking was an effort but he managed it.

"I'm sorry too," he said softly. "I don't know whether I'm in love with you or not. I don't want to know. I want to forget you. I almost

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had—I mean I didn't think of you all the time and want you. Now you've come back and I'll go through it all again. We can't get married—and you're not made for—for the other thing." With jerky suddenness he was on his feet. "Let's go back," he said, his voice a strained whisper.

Patricia looked up at him and her own face grew pale. "Bill," she said, frightened—"Bill, don't look that way. Don't!" she cried, jumping to her feet. "Don't! Billy!"

Unknowingly, he was staring at her, his face white, his nostrils fluttering, and his eyes wide and bright. The "Billy" brought him back to reality; it startled him into a realization of the situation. No one but his mother had ever used that name. It held a thousand tender associations for him, and they broke through his passion and relaxed him.

For a moment he lowered his eyes, and when he looked up at her, they were calmer. "I'm sorry," he said softly. "I wasn't meant for this sort of thing."

Ashamed, Patricia could not meet his gaze. "I'm sorry too," she confessed unhappily. "I've made it very hard, I'm afraid—and I didn't mean to." She scuffed some rotting, frozen leaves with

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the toe of her shoe and whispered, "I'm terribly sorry. I haven't played fair."

"Oh, it isn't that," he cried. "It's just that I can't be around you; that's all. You drive me crazy. I don't know why but you do. You're too fine. I can't ——" He broke off sharply and added, almost pleadingly, "Let's go back, Patricia. I can't stand this."

"All right," she agreed, sad and dispirited. "Let's go. Tell me, though, why we have to suffer this way. I don't understand."

Her depression tamed Bill as no protests could have done. Instantly, his only desire was to protect and cheer her. He was sure of himself when he answered.

"I don't know," he said. "I guess it's because you're fine and I'm—I'm experienced. You've put me on my honor and I can't—I can't do anything because you trust me."

"I do trust you," she confessed, looking up at him, and he was startled to see that her black eyes were bright with tears. "I trust you absolutely, and I love you for being stronger than I am. Take me home, Bill. I won't bother you again."

She pulled a handkerchief out of her pocket,

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dried her eyes, and followed him slowly as he sought the path between the trees. He didn't know just where it was but he thought he could find it. For fifteen minutes they walked in silence, Bill leading the way, Patricia trudging miserably behind him. Then he paused and turned. "We'd better hurry," he said huskily; "it's beginning to snow and it'll be dark in no time."

"All right. You set the pace. I'll keep up."

He began to walk rapidly, stopping occasionally to hold a branch for her, or turning to see if she was tiring. The snow began to fall fast and a cold wind shrieked through the bare trees. The snow was as fine as flour and cut like powdered glass. Bill fumbled in his pockets, found a knitted toque, and pulled it down over his ears. From another pocket he produced a pair of woolen gloves and drew them on. Then he hunched his shoulders forward and increased his pace.

He was sure he could find his way back to the village if he could hit the path or strike through to a clearing where he was sure to find a landmark. Darkness was pouring down through the black branches with the snow; the trail must be somewhere near, but where? Where? The go-

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ing was hard and the cold was bitter. If he didn't get Patricia to the road in another half hour, there was no telling where they would land—if anywhere.

She said nothing but kept close to his heels. The snow slashed her face; it was like a sand storm of ice. The cold cut through her great coat; she was wet with sweat and her wrists felt stiff and frozen. Yet she kept on and never once asked for a moment to rest. "She's game," thought Bill, thrilling to her courage, "game as hell. God, where are we?"

He didn't know. They had been walking nearly half an hour already and they had arrived nowhere. He had given up all hope of finding a path; his one plan was to break through the woods into an opening. The gloomy twilight had deepened into night, and he was guessing at direction. If he was heading in the right way, they ought to be out of the woods in another fifteen minutes; if he wasn't—well, they must be going in a circle, that's all. The woods were only a few miles in diameter—ten at their widest. If he could only hold to one direction, he was bound to hit either a clearing or the river, and either offered safety. He stopped, apparently to ask a question

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that was worrying him, really to give Patricia a rest.

"Won't your aunt and Harry be frightened?" he asked.

"No," she replied, panting a little and pulling her hat down tighter over her ears. "I told them I might have dinner with you and not get back until later."

"That's good," he lied cheerfully. No chance of a search party. He *had* to get out of those woods. His wrist watch told him that it was only a quarter after five—and he didn't know where he was.

"Tired?" he asked gently.

"Not now. I've got my wind again. I think we're going in a circle. Hadn't we better bear to the right? That's the way we came, I think, and there's no chance of finding the path now." She drew her arms close to her sides as the wind howled and the snow fell in driven clouds. There was no fear in her voice, however. She was calm, and Bill thought she sounded almost happy.

He took hold of her arm and turned to the right. It seemed altogether the wrong direction to him, but he had no sense of direction left. Perhaps that was the way to go. If it wasn't, it

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would lead out of the forest eventually, anyway—if he could stick to it. In five minutes there was no longer any direction, only black trees that one bumped into silently, bushes that switched their frozen faces, brambles that seemed to reach out in the night to scratch fiercely, snow drifting into heaps through which they struggled and stumbled, and the wind that cut more mercilessly than the briars. Sometimes Bill was ahead of Patricia, sometimes he was beside her holding her arm, and sometimes his arm was around her, guiding and supporting her as they fought through the drifts. Neither said anything. In the brief moments when the shrieking wind softened, Bill could hear her panting, but she never leaned against him, never complained, never asked for help or rest. “Game,” he thought over and over again, “game clean through.”

The blackness was unbelievable; they could see nothing, not even the snow. It slashed against their faces, paused as if for breath, and then slashed again. Bill walked with his right hand held straight in front of him, trying to avoid the trees, and sweeping the branches of the bushes back as his arm came in contact with them. His legs felt heavy and his shoulders frozen, and

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some perverse instinct made him try to keep his eyes open. He could not have walked more blindly if they had been tight closed. On and on they floundered, whether in a straight line or in a circle, he did not know. Constantly he fought a desire to bear to the right, but he had no idea whether he was winning or losing.

He bumped into a large tree, stumbled, and stopped.

"Let's rest," he gasped.

Patricia slumped against the tree beside him and breathed heavily. The snow whipped icily against their faces, piled over their shoes. The darkness was terrible in its invisible mystery; it was denser than the snow. They could see nothing, not even each other, and despite their struggles, they were cold to the bone.

They leaned against the tree, getting colder and colder. A black depression was settling on Bill; a chill of fear cut through him that was worse than the chill of the night and the storm.

He was startled to hear Patricia laughing. The wind drowned the laugh, and then her voice rose high and gay.

"Bill," she called, "we're lost. This is romance."

"It's hell," he shouted back, cheered by her

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laugh, "and it'll be worse hell if we don't find our way out pretty quick."

"We'll find it—don't worry. These woods are small."

Small the woods might be in daytime, but now they were endless. They seemed to stretch in every direction forever, and the snow grew thicker, the wind more piercing, the cold more bitter. Heartened a little by Patricia's endurance and courage, Bill struggled on, but he was frightened. He knew that she could not keep up the battle a great deal longer. He was tired himself. She must be exhausted.

On they fought, on and on, floundering through the drifts, stumbling, picking themselves up, knocking against each other, clawing at bushes and bumping brutally into trees, staggering back hurt and breathless, and then forward again, sometimes clinging to each other, sometimes a little apart, then grasping blindly in the night for a coat sleeve—on and on, panting with exhaustion, aching with cold, forcing leaden legs to take another step—on and on to nowhere.

Bill stumbled against something. Instinctively, he threw his hands in front of him to protect himself, and as he fell to the ground, his

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hands slid down the trunk of a tree. Patricia asked in a scream if he were hurt. He called back no, but for her to stand still. Then he rose painfully to his feet and embraced the tree with his stiff arms. He moved them up and down. He was right; it was smooth, there was no bark.

With numbed, aching fingers he searched in his trousers' pockets and found a box of matches. Clumsily, he struck one. In its brief flare of light he saw that the tree was white and old. He struck another. Then he shouted.

"What is it?" shrieked Patricia. "What are you looking for?"

"I know where I am," he called, reaching out in the darkness until he touched her. He drew her close to him and explained, fighting for enough breath: "I've seen this tree before. It's been struck by lightning. It's only a little way from the path and not more than half a mile from the road. You stay here. I'm going to find the path. I don't know which direction it is."

"How will I know where you are?" For the first time there was fear in her voice.

"You'll see the matches and I'll keep yelling back. I won't go more than thirty yards in any direction."

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There was a pause and then she called, "All right; I'll wait."

Bill gripped her arm; she reached for him—he was gone. A second later she saw a match flare, then a second and a third. Bill called. She answered. Then there was the brief light of another match. Then nothing. She listened. Bill was calling somewhere, she knew; he was striking matches, but the trees hid the light and the wind drowned his voice. "Bill! Bill!" she shrieked and started forward, holding her hands blindly before her. "Bill! Bill!" She stumbled and fell. "Bill!" she moaned. "Oh, Bill, my dear!"

The next thing she knew Bill was chafing her hands and jerking her body up and down. As he felt her move, he lifted her and stood her on her feet. Holding his right arm firmly about her, he opened his jacket and drew her close against his body, then stretched his jacket as far as possible around her. Shivering she lay against him, weak and drowsy. She was going to sleep when he began shaking her. He pinched her numbed cheeks, pulled her body sharply against his, and swung her back and forth.

"Don't, Bill," she said at last; "I'm all right."

"Thank God!" he cried. "I wasn't gone five

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minutes and you'd passed out. I thought I'd never find you."

"I fell—and I guess I fainted. Make me walk, Bill; I'm sleepy." She tried to hide the weariness in her voice but he heard it, and he felt a surge of admiration sweep through his whole being. "Game," he thought for the hundredth time, "game as hell."

He lighted three matches before he was sure of the way to go; then with his arm tight around her waist, he broke his way through the bushes until he came to the path. Three more precious matches were used before he was sure it really was the path and not just a small opening. He turned to Patricia and shouted above the wind:

"Are you good for half a mile more?"

"Yes," she called back. "Go ahead. I'll follow."

Fortunately the matches lasted until they reached the end of the woods. Suddenly a brilliant light broke through the curtain of snow and blinded them. Automobile headlights. The road couldn't be thirty yards away.

Bill stopped in the lee of a big tree and drew Patricia to him. For minutes they stood there, Bill leaning weakly against the tree, Patricia lean-

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ing against him. Once he knew they were safe, all his strength seemed to vanish. Not until then did he know how frightened he had been, how terrified for Patricia. She felt him trembling.

"What is it?" she cried. "What's wrong?"

"Nothing," he replied, and then laughed when his voice shook hysterically. "I'm just scared to death now that we're all right; that's all. Wait a minute."

She turned and put her arms around him. He held her close, and something that he had forgotten came to drive away his weariness and fear. Tighter and tighter he held her, his numbed arms by some miracle responding to his passion, and through his jacket he could feel the clasp of her arms.

"Kiss me, Bill." The words in the darkness meant nothing. He didn't believe them. Then again: "Bill—Bill, kiss me!" The cry was a command and a prayer; it broke from her like a release from pain; it blinded Bill as the headlights had done, and at that moment to her it meant the same thing—freedom.

He bent his head and his lips touched her cold cheek. Then they found her lips. When he released her, he felt her relax against him.

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The wind died to a sigh and he heard her say, "I knew you'd kiss like that. Hard and clean. Take me home now, please."

Again he put his arm around her and fought through the driving snow and the drifts to the road. The few yards seemed endless; lifting each foot was a task almost beyond their strength, but eventually they reached the road and paused. A minute later they saw the lights of an approaching car. Bill stood in the middle of the road and held up his arms. The car stopped.

"Get lost?" called the driver, sticking his head out of the window he had opened.

"A little while," Bill replied. "Take us to the Inn?"

"Sure. Get in."

When they were in the car, Patricia said, "I'll write you a note in the morning, and ——" She had fallen asleep against Bill's shoulder. She was still asleep when he carried her into the hotel.

CHAPTER X

BILL never could remember just what happened after he went into the hotel. The steam-heated air swirled about him like ether and drugged him almost as completely as if it had been. Harry Coombs told him afterward that he hadn't fainted, that he had delivered Patricia into Mrs. Coombs's keeping, given a brief account of the adventure, made his excuses, and said good night. He had vague, confused memories of wrists and feet that pained unbearably, of feeling a great sense of relief when he breathed cold air again, of climbing endless flights of stairs, but that was all. When he awoke the next morning at eleven o'clock, he was surprised to find that he was in bed wearing pajamas. Habit had been stronger than his weariness, stronger even than his overwhelming desire for sleep.

He wriggled around comfortably in the bed. No, he wasn't very tired. His face was sore and his wrists still stiff, but the weariness seemed gone. He felt lazy and contented, unwilling to make

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any effort; otherwise there was nothing to remind him of the strain he had endured. After he had had a hot shower and a cold one, he felt better, more alive; and after he had eaten a big breakfast, which included three cups of coffee, he was sure that he was ready for anything—especially to see Patricia. He was a little worried about her. She had borne more than she was strong enough to bear, and the results might be serious.

He stopped at the Inn and asked if he could see Miss Roberts.

"She had breakfast sent up to her room more than an hour ago," the clerk said, "and a little while ago she sent down a note for you. She 'phoned down and told me to tell you she was a little tired but otherwise all right. Mr. Coombs is up there now. Shall I 'phone up for him?"

"No," replied Bill, taking the letter the clerk held out to him. "You might 'phone up, though, that I'm feeling fine and that I'll call around later. Thanks."

He did not open the letter until he was alone again in his own room. To his surprise, he found that he had no desire to hurry across the campus and that the three flights of dormitory stairs seemed longer and steeper than usual. Maybe he

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was a little more tired than he had thought. He had relaxed suddenly when he learned that Patricia was well, and most of his strength seemed to have slipped out of him along with the worry. He felt hollow, incapable of effort or emotion.

He stretched out in the morris chair and opened the letter, slowly breaking the envelope and unfolding the sheets as slowly. There was no eagerness in his movements or in his mind, just a weak sort of contentment. It was a pleasure to hear from Patricia but in no way a thrill.

"Dear Bill," the letter began:

"I am writing to you because I don't think I had better see you. I'm quite all right, a little tired and weak and scratched up with a lot of aches here and there, but I'm not sick in any way. Aunt Martha wants me to stay in bed today and I think I will for safety's sake—and for the sake of my aches too. After another night's sleep I'll be as good as new; so don't worry about me. Harry told me that he peeked into your room an hour ago and that you were sound asleep, and so I'm going to take it for granted you are all right too unless I hear otherwise.

"I'm rather glad we had that terrible experience. It taught me a lot of things about you. I

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think you saved my life, but I'm not going to thank you for that because I think you'd hate to be thanked. (Oh, Lord, I'm weary. Writing is such an effort. I wouldn't write to anybody in the world but you today.) It's odd; I'm lots more in love with you today than I was yesterday, but I haven't a single emotion but a desire to rest."

"Me too," thought Bill, lowering the letter into his lap. "I feel as if I'd been on a big spree and was sort of pleased about it." He picked up the letter and read on:

"I've been awake for two hours and I've been thinking—about you and me, I mean. I'm pretty sure I'm in love with you now—not the way I was at first, but really in love. If I weren't so tired, I'd be thrilled, I suppose, but I'm not; I'm just lazily at peace. I know a lot about you now. At first I thought I was in love with you and I was ashamed. Now I'm not ashamed; I'm proud."

Again Bill lowered the letter. It was an effort to hold it up—and the words didn't mean very much. So she was really in love with him. . . . That was fine—fine. . . . He guessed he was in love with her too. . . . She was. . . .

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It was dark when he awoke. Minutes passed before he was fully conscious, and more minutes passed before he realized that he had slept the day through. Lazily he reached out and switched on the desk light. For a moment the light dazzled his eyes and then he noticed the letter on his knees. "God," he thought, deeply ashamed of himself, "I went to sleep reading her letter. I certainly must have been all in. That's funny; I felt fine when I got up." He picked up the letter and was surprised to find that it was from Harry.

"Dear Bill," he read:

"You'll find your letter on your desk. It had slipped off on to the floor. I looked in two or three times but you were always snoozing. I closed the window and you never heard me. I just wanted to see how you were and tell you that Pat's all right. She's tired as the devil but she didn't catch cold or anything. Unless she's a liar, you're a hero. I'm going back to the Inn. When you wake up, 'phone to me there and let me know how you're feeling."

Bill pulled himself out of the chair and stretched until his bones cracked, yawned, and stretched again. Then he went to the bathroom and washed his face for five minutes in cold water

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and was delighted to find that he was beginning to feel alive. He was suddenly eager to read Patricia's letter. He hurried back to his room, drying his hands and face on the towel as he went. Eagerness, after no sensations at all, was exciting.

He found as he read the letter that it was all new to him. He knew that he had read some of it before, but not one word could he remember. When he came to the paragraph where she said that she was really in love with him, he flushed with pleasure and breathed, "God!" and hurried on to the next paragraph.

"It's such an effort to write," Patricia had continued, "but I feel I must. I'm going to go to sleep again and I must get all this off my mind before I do. I think I love you now and I'm sure you could make me—and once more I'm going to be a coward and ask you not to. You've already told me that you don't want to love me, and if I'm going to love you, I want to do it without being made.

"I don't think you'd better see me again before we leave. We'll take the early train tomorrow and Harry will ship my car down by freight. If we see each other we'll be sorry. There will

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either be an awful let-down or we'll want to get married. I don't want the let-down and I don't think I want to get married just now—and I'm sure you don't want either a let-down or marriage.

"I'm too tired to write more. I just can't do it. Leave a note for me at the desk telling me how you are. And write to me at home and tell me all about yourself—please. And be frank with me, Bill. Maybe I haven't been square with you but I've tried to be honest. If you don't love me, say so—and tell me why you don't want to love me.

"Patricia."

He was pleased by the letter, deeply pleased, but he wasn't moved or excited—just pleased. "I wonder if I'm not in love with her or whether I'm too tired to care or what," he thought—and yet, he didn't feel very tired. Somehow Patricia did not seem quite real; she was hardly more than a vaguely lovely memory. Even yesterday's experience seemed a dream, and he looked out of the window to assure himself there had been a storm.

The lights from dormitory windows shone on gleaming white snow, and a street light revealed

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a path cut through it. The snow was fully two feet deep. He had no more doubt about the reality of the storm, but the reality of the experience was still evasive.

He sat long at his desk trying to decide what was best to write. At last, still undecided, he picked up his pen and scribbled rapidly:

"Dear Patricia:

"I don't know what to say. You told me to be honest, and that's the only honest thing I can write you—that I don't know what to say, I mean. I'm dead tired and I'm in a dreadful fog. I didn't know I was tired but I went to sleep reading your letter and slept all day. (Is that honest enough for you? If it isn't insulting enough to convince you, I don't know what could be.) I don't know what to say because I can't feel anything but tired. How did you ever get up energy enough to write so much? I haven't pep enough even to feel.

"I'd like to see you again just to find out if you are real. Right now you aren't. Nothing is. I can't say whether I'm in love with you or not because you don't exist. You and the storm are just dreams. Am I being insulting again? I hope not. I haven't any desire to be. I haven't

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a desire for anything except a little food and lots more sleep.

"I'll write to you again tomorrow to Larchmont, and then maybe I'll be able to say something that will have some meaning. I'll tell you all about myself, as you asked—but don't expect to be thrilled; it's a dull story.

"Dopily,
"Bill."

He read the note through, shook his head in disgust, and added a P.S.: "I've just read this mess. If you can find any sense in it, you can do better than I can. I've found out, though, why I got an A in English 1. I put that semicolon in the right place and I put it there without knowing it. That's scholarship. W.R."

He strolled across the campus to the Inn, gave the note to the clerk, stopped at the cafeteria long enough to eat a bowl of cereal and drink a glass of milk, and then he went back to his room and to bed. When he awoke the next morning he found a note on the floor which some one had slipped under the door. He leaped out of bed, snatched up the note, and hurried to get under

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the covers again. He was excited when he found that the note was from Patricia, so excited that he did not think of his excitement until later.

"Dear Bill," the letter began:

"I loved your letter because I feel just the same way—and the semi-colon awed me. I came out of my fog long enough to write to you and then went right back into it again. I'm more awake now—and you aren't real. Do you suppose we've been dreaming? I'd like to wake up and find out. Maybe I'll know when I get your letter.

"Patricia."

Bill slid his cold shoulders under the covers and grinned happily. She'd find out all right, all right. . . . Then, suddenly alive, he leaped out of bed, rushed to the window, slammed it down, turned on the heat, and reached for his bathrobe. He glanced at his alarm clock. It said twenty minutes after three. "Damn!" he exclaimed aloud. "I forgot to wind it." He picked up his watch from the desk. It had stopped too. A glance out of the window revealed a long string of students hurrying across the campus between

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banks of snow. "A class is just out," he thought; "the bell will ring in a minute." It did—ten times. "Oh, hell!" he cried miserably, throwing his bathrobe furiously on the couch. "She's been gone two hours!"

CHAPTER XI

BILL attended classes that day and tried hard not to think of Patricia. He wasn't very successful, but his self-inflicted defeat didn't distress him much. All his weariness was gone. He remembered the snow storm as something dramatic and thrilling, something to be treasured because it had earned him Patricia's kiss. He wondered if he weren't absurdly sentimental, a little childish to be feeling so excited and happy, but his standards of emotional conduct refused to rise higher than his emotions, and so he remained happy. All day he was curiously, eagerly alert; he was waiting for something—and when night came, he knew what it was: it was freedom so that he might write to Patricia.

He wrote for hours and was so deeply engrossed in what he wrote that he never once thought of the tasks on his desk which needed to be done. He told her the story of his life, of how hard he had had to work and how thwarted he had been in his work by his lack of education.

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"Don't think I'm being sorry for myself," he wrote, "because I'm not. I had a darn-good time when I was a kid and I enjoyed working. I'm glad I did all of it from selling newspapers up." He told Patricia about his mother; he told her about football and a little about the trouble it had caused him; and, finally, he told about his reasons for coming to college and about his ambitions.

"Now you can see, perhaps," he explained, "why I don't want to fall in love. Maybe it will sound silly to you, but I don't want to fall in love for the same reason I don't want to play football or hold class offices or join a fraternity; I haven't time. Love matters and the other things don't. I'm not such an idiot that I don't know that, but I can forget the other things and I can't forget you. I don't know whether I'm in love with you or not. I do know this, though: I'm trying so hard not to be that I'm afraid I am. And I feel so happy tonight that I'm sure something is wrong. And I've been wanting to stop talking about myself all the time and tell you how wonderful you are—that you're the bravest, gamest girl I've ever known. Yes, and you're the honestest too. Oh, damn it, Patricia

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dearest, I can't fall in love until I graduate. What am I going to do?"

He was on tenterhooks until her answer came. He sought out Harry Coombs so that he could talk to him about Patricia, turned red, and called Harry a crazy fool when he told Bill he'd like to be best man—and went on talking about Patricia. Her letter dropped him from a great height with a thud. Its very briefness hurt, and yet there was nothing in it to which he could reasonably object. He admitted to himself that she had written just what he wanted her to write; nevertheless, her letter made him miserably unhappy.

"I understand perfectly, Bill," she had written, "and I don't know whether to respect you for your attitude or think you an awful fool. It doesn't make any difference, after all. You have a job to do that is tremendously worth doing and you can't do it if I interfere, and so I'm not going to. I'm glad I came to Raleigh; I'm glad we were lost in the storm; I'm glad I made you kiss me—but I'm not going to try to repeat the experience. I'm not going to write to you again this term, I'm not coming again to Raleigh, and I don't want you to write to me. If we love each

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other, we can wait—and if we don't, we'll find it out by waiting. Do your job. Then if you want to, write to me during vacation and maybe we'll see each other. In the meantime I'm going to play square with you and with myself and neither write to you nor see you—and I hope you'll play fair with me and keep silent too."

Bill was sadly let down and deeply hurt. He knew that his hurt was unjustified. He had ordered the medicine, and if he didn't like the taste or the results, the fault was entirely in the prescription. Unwilling to accept her ban on letters, he wrote three to her—and tore them up. Finally he wrote a brief note asking her to reconsider her decision and sent it. For a week thereafter he bounded up the three flights of stairs twice daily and burst into his room to see if the postman had left a letter from Patricia, but no letter came. At first he was hurt, then angry, then again hurt. "If she cared a damn about me," he thought miserably, "*she'd have* to write. Oh, to hell with girls anyway!"

With an effort he learned to study again, but it was weeks before he learned not to look for a letter. He could see it on the floor of his room as he came up the stairs, and it was always

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with a shock of surprise that he discovered a blank space where the letter should have been. Gradually, however, studies began to absorb his thoughts, spring practice came along to take some of his time, and finally he managed to calm himself with the assurance that he would see Patricia during the summer vacation.

He studied hard, took malicious delight in going to the bank once a week and winding the clock while John stood by and cackled his glee in his staccato laughter, religiously attended football practice, grew a little pensive on the warm nights when the boys gathered on the campus for a hum, and twice—to his own high contempt—went to track meets. He felt ashamed of himself for going, not because he was wasting time, though he felt that he was, but because he didn't have the strength to stay away. He loved athletic contests of all kinds, and the temptation offered by a good race was stronger than the call to books. He excused himself to himself by arguing that he would study better for the relaxation, and then sneered at his dishonesty with himself. The reason was good, he knew, but it wasn't the reason which led him to the athletic field. He decided that he must be a Puritan with a pleasure in in-

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flicting self-chastisement. Eventually he grinned at his reasoning. "I'm trying to find an excuse," he thought, "for not sticking to my job—and I haven't the guts to go to the meet just because I want to go, and I haven't the guts to stay away from it either because I ought to."

He was so busy that he wasn't often lonely, and when time allowed—and sometimes when it didn't—his mind was too occupied with thoughts of Patricia for him to be much concerned with the attitude of the campus toward him. Had he watched it and thought about it, he would have been forced to see that it was crystallizing into set hostility. It would have surprised him if he had known how often he was discussed in dormitory rooms and before fraternity fireplaces; it would have particularly surprised him if he had known that he had become a symbol for everything which was undesirable in the eyes of the undergraduates; he was, so they said, "a dirty grind," he was "too damned high-hat," he was "wet,"—and by "wet" they meant that he was queer, not that he was a drinker—he was "snotty," and, in general, he wasn't "a real Raleigh man." Even his earnest application to his books was held against him. A man who was considered a "good

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guy" might also be a good student and escape censure, as Harry Coombs did, but a student who wasn't also "regular" was scorned.

Bill was in no way "regular," and since he was conspicuous by virtue of his athletic prowess, all his irregular traits were magnified into crimes by his critics. Bill would have been surprised if he had known how sharply he was being criticized, but he would have been far more surprised if he had known that ninety per cent of his critics would have toadied to him if he had given them even half a chance. He felt that the whole campus was in a conspiracy to steal his time, and he never dreamed that the campus wanted only to idolize him. The gods had made him for a college hero. The stage was set and he refused to play his part. The eager audience was kept waiting, and like other audiences it applauded good-naturedly for a time and then when the show didn't begin, it hissed. Bill was too occupied with work and dreams to pay much attention, but occasionally the malice broke through his indifference, and, being very human, he winced.

His friendship with Harry Coombs had been the only thing in his favor, and in May he nullified that by "taking up with the queerest bird on

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the whole damn campus." Every one was a little disturbed by Freddy Schiller. He was irregular in every possible way. To begin with, he had a German grandfather, and there were many youths at Raleigh who were so pugnaciously one hundred per cent American that no "Freddy" could palliate the "Friedrich" it stood for. In the second place, he was so painfully shy that his associates avoided speaking to him whenever possible. It was kindness that made them avoid him, but most of the boys were sensitive enough to realize that they hurt him as much by not speaking as they embarrassed him by speaking. They felt sorry for him, and in trying to be kind they were cruel. Whatever they did was wrong, and they disliked him for making them feel like torturers. His shyness was a disease; he could not recite in the classroom without turning fiery red and stuttering in an agony of self consciousness, and sometimes he could not recite at all; he could not speak to any one without either turning red or a ghastly gray white; and he could not sing unless he was drunk. Queerest of all were his drunken spells; then he was either a miserable, snivelling child—or a god. Like Bill, he was a god who refused his godhead, but unlike Bill, his

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refusal was involuntary. He did not scorn Olympus; he craved it above anything on earth or in heaven, but he could scale its heights only when he was fortified with liquor. Therefore he drank often and deep, and if liquor was a magic which sometimes turned him into a pig, it was also powerful enough sometimes to give him the gift of song. He drank only that he might sing, and if he grunted instead, he could only bear the shame his swinishness always brought him—and take another chance by getting drunk again.

Bill did not know Freddy Schiller except by sight, but he had heard a great deal of talk about him. The students never tired of talking about his queerness and about his voice. He held all the fascination for them of a side-show freak, and if they pitied him sometimes, they laughed at him at other times. He was a junior when Bill was a sophomore, and his record was good, since he had made up for his regular classroom failures by writing brilliant examination papers. His agony was so apparent that everybody wondered why he stayed in college, but everybody was glad that he did stay, partly because he was always an interesting topic for conversation, and partly because sometimes when he was drunk he sang.

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Freddy never had to pay for his liquor. When a group decided to go to a neighboring town for a spree, some one was sure to say, "Let's get Freddy Schiller. Maybe he'll sing." Then they would go to Freddy's room, drag him with them, regardless of how much he blushed and stuttered protests, and hurry him to the bootlegger's comfortable bar. After a couple of drinks, his shyness began to evaporate, and after two or three more, he either became very sick or rewarded his hosts with the music for which they had gambled.

One night in May when the moon was full and the campus was mysterious with silver light and shifting shadows, Bill was annoyed to hear loud voices under his window. Studying had been hard enough that evening, anyhow. To begin with, there had been a hum, and he had sat in his window and listened to hundreds of boys singing—and thought of Patricia. He had been in a dreamy mood, and nothing that he could do would dispel it. The campus had turned to music that night. Groups of fellows had wandered singing among the buildings; they had sat on fraternity piazzas and sung, on dormitory steps and in dormitory windows; they had twanged ukeleles and banjos, played violins and pianos; the glee

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club had sung for an hour on the chapel steps. There had been music everywhere, and there had been moonlight, and the soft, balmy spring air had drifted through Bill's open window, and Patricia like a lovely wraith had hovered enticingly between him and his book. By eleven o'clock, however, the campus had grown silent and he had begun to study; then came the loud voices. Angry, he went to the window to close it. With his hand on the sash, he paused and listened.

"Let me alone!" some one cried irritably; "let me alone, I say!"

"Come on home, Freddy," another boy said more softly. "Be a good scout. You're drunk, old man. Come on; I'm going to put you to bed." He was very urgent and gentle as if he were speaking to a wilful child.

"Let me alone, I say!" It was a scream of protest. "I'm not drunk. I'm going to sing, do you hear? I'm going to sing."

"Let him alone, George," said a third boy hastily. "Go ahead, Freddy. Sing your heart out, old fellow."

Bill leaned out of his window and saw a shadowy group far below. There were four or five altogether, he thought. One figure detached it-

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self and moved stiffly toward the center of the lawn. It was all in white—white flannel trousers and a white sweater, and it looked unreal in the moonlight. Windows in the dormitory began to go up. Somebody called, "Pipe down, down there," and one of the group on the lawn called back, "Shut up, you damn fool; Freddy Schiller's going to sing."

Instantly there was silence. The white figure paused and turned toward the dormitory. There was a breathless hush—and then out of the night came the voice. Gone were all restraints, all the fears and complexes, all the shyness; Freddy was a god once more and he was singing. Those who despised him knelt down to worship.

Bill didn't know what the boy was singing. He had never heard the melody, but it touched his heart as no song had ever touched it before. Freddy was singing in Italian, and so Bill could not understand the words; but it needed no words to tell that this was the song of a broken heart, it was a cry of sorrow lyric with pain.

Freddy stood white and ghostly on the lawn, his arms outstretched, his slender body wavering tensely. The great elms and shadowy buildings were his stage, the silver moon his spotlight. He

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was truly a god because only gods have voices like his. He was a Prometheus bound with the cruel thongs of his shyness, a titan made impotent with fear, an Antæus whose feet rarely touched the strength-giving earth. Tonight his feet were firmly planted; he was free, he was strong—and he sang. His voice was rich and pure, and masters had trained it. It was the beautiful slave of his passion and it obeyed his will.

It was a clown's song that he gave voice to so beautifully; it was Canio's cry for the faithless Nedda. Freddy knew; he understood. He was a clown, too, a Canio who could never be gay, beat the drum as hard as he would, and life had always been a Nedda to him—a jade as faithless as she was lovely. He poured out his sorrow with all the strength of his being, all the glory of his voice; higher it rose and higher, a sobbing cry, poignant as beauty—higher still and higher. Then on a last note that seemed to have been torn living from sorrow it broke. Freddy stood there, his face in his hands, his body shaking.

The campus was silent. One could hear the faint whispering of the soft wind in the elms. Somewhere a window closed, somebody said reverently, "My God," and then one of the group

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on the lawn below said, "I'll get him." The voice was husky, choked. The boy strode rapidly across the lawn, put his arm around Freddy, and led him slowly out of sight between the buildings.

Bill slumped down on the window seat and knocked a pile of books to the floor. Unheeding, he leaned on the sill and looked out at the campus, again deserted and quiet. He felt weak, utterly spent.

"And they laugh at that fellow," he thought sadly; "they laugh at him."

He sat there a long time, too moved, too dreamy to care about books, but when he finally lifted himself slowly from the window seat, he had made a decision. Freddy had done what not even Patricia had done; he had made everything but himself and his great gift seem insignificant.

CHAPTER XII

THE next morning as Bill was returning to his dormitory from a ten-o'clock class he met Harry Coombs and Tennyson Morris. Morris had been christened "Henry Alfred Tennyson," and so he was sometimes known as Hank, sometimes as Harry, often as Hat, but usually as Tenny. His mother and sister always called him Tennyson, and he said that when he was around them he felt as if he ought to be psychoanalyzed. He was a clever, sophisticated lad and the leader of both the glee club and the orchestra. Bill knew him only slightly, but on this particular morning he was exactly the person Bill wanted to see.

"You're just the fellows I'm looking for," Bill said after Harry and Tenny had each said, "Hi there, fella," which was the proper collegiate greeting at Raleigh just then. "You know something about music and I don't."

"That's kind of you, Bill," said Harry, grinning broadly. "Of course, I'm the backbone of the banjo club and I admit I swing a mighty mean

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pick, but somehow I honestly never thought I knew anything about music."

"You don't," Tenny agreed, "and I'm going to kick you off the glee club if I catch you singing flat again. Sing the notes, boy. You try to turn everything into the whole-tone scale. I hope that's your idea. If it isn't, you're just a godawful singer." A smile took the sting out of his words, and Harry smiled back.

"I've never met a whole-tone scale," he rejoined, blithely indifferent to the censure, "and I don't want to. My ear's made for smaller intervals. Shucks, Tenny, I scorn half tones. It's quarter tones I'm singing. I have a yen for Chinese music."

Tenny laughed and threw himself on the lawn. "That's a rotten pun—but I didn't think you could make one at all; so my hat's off to you. Come on; let's waste some time having a smoke. It's so nice and warm and lazy this morning I think I'll commune with God under a tree instead of going to Bib. Lit."

Without a word Harry dropped down beside him, and after hesitating a moment, Bill joined them. Scorning superstition, they lighted their

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three cigarettes from one match and then Bill said:

"I haven't an eleven-o'clock, but I have a hell of a lot of work to do just the same. I guess I'll give you fellows a few precious minutes, though, because I want to get something out of you."

"Thanks for your generosity," Tenny remarked a trifle unpleasantly.

"Oh, don't get on your ear, Tenny," Harry objected. "You're so doggone sensitive you can't tell when a fellow's joking. Go ahead, Bill, and shoot your question—and don't mind this bird. He's thick-headed and thin-skinned."

Tenny laughed then. "You're getting clever, Harry. Been reading Wilde?"

"No; he's not my kind; I don't burn incense in my room."

"Sophistication!" Tenny shouted, slapping Harry on the back. "So help me God—sophistication!" He grew paternal and added solemnly, "Be careful, my boy, or you'll lose your charm. It lies in your innocence."

Harry let two streamers of smoke trail slowly out of his nostrils, grinned good-naturedly, and replied, "Don't worry, Tenny. My charm's safe;

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I'm still pure." He shifted his position slightly and turned to Bill. "What's on your mind, old man? What did you want to know?"

Harry's amiability smoothed down Bill's fur. It had risen a little in response to Tenny's caustic remark. "Did you hear Freddy Schiller singing last night?" he asked, addressing his question to both the boys.

Harry and Tenny answered together. Harry said, "No," and Tenny said, "Yes—and, my God, wasn't it wonderful? I'd never heard him before. He's magnificent."

"That's what I thought. I don't know a thing really about music," Bill admitted. "My mother used to take me to concerts when I was a kid and I can carry a tune, but I'm no judge of what's good or bad, but I thought Schiller was wonderful. I've never heard singing like his." He was speaking over Harry's prone body to Tenny.

Harry tossed his cigarette away, murmured, "I've heard him just once; he was a knock-out," and closed his eyes.

"He's marvelous!" Tenny had always held Bill in considerable contempt, classifying him simply as "one of those dumb athletes," but Bill's modesty regarding his knowledge of music and

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his honest admiration for Schiller's singing softened Tenny's opinion. He said: "Hello, Sam. How's the boy?" to a passing student, dropped his ironic manner, and permitted himself to be natural.

"He's really a great singer, you know," he continued. "I don't know anything about him, but only a great singer could sing that aria the way he did last night. I've heard it half a dozen times—twice at the Metropolitan, two or three times in Paris, once at La Scala, and—oh, I don't know, two or three times other places. Well, I've never heard it sung the way he did it last night. I never heard Caruso do it. They say it was his greatest aria, but I don't believe he could have moved me more than Freddy did. I don't suppose Freddy is any Caruso, but you can bet he's better than nine-tenths of them right now."

"What was it he sang?" Bill asked. "I'd never heard it before."

"It's Canio's song from *Pagliacci*. It's a fat song for a good tenor, but it will sure show up a bad one. Freddy's good—good as hell."

"What's the matter with him then? I've heard he has to get drunk before he can sing."

"He does. He's so shy he can't talk, let alone

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sing. I don't know what's the matter. Something's inhibited him and liquor gives him courage—releases his inhibitions some way. I went around once and tried to get him to come out for the glee club. He damn near died. He couldn't say a word—just went white and shook his head. It's a dirty shame. Some psychoanalyst ought to get hold of him."

"Maybe one has," Bill said sapiently. "Maybe that's the trouble. If one of them like Prof. Atkins in the Psych Department got hold of him, he'd scare the gizzard out of him. Atkins is so hipped on sex he'd make a marine feel like a sissy."

Surprised, Tenny looked at Bill. Bill wasn't as dumb as he had thought. For an athlete he talked good sense.

Harry sat up suddenly. "Freddy's just like a rabbit," he said. "He always looks as if he were looking for a hole to dive into. I feel awfully sorry for him."

Bill got slowly to his feet. "No," he contradicted thoughtfully, looking down at Harry, "he's not like a rabbit. A rabbit's scared because it's always been weak, and a fellow with a power inside him like Freddy's isn't weak. Something's

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made him that way. He wasn't born scared. He must know he's got strength. I'll bet something awful's happened to him some time or other. Sorry, but I've got to go now. So long." He lifted his hand in a vague salute and walked quickly away.

Tenny looked after him and then said, "He's so damned high-hat I'd like to kick his tail, but he's not dumb."

"No, and he's not high-hat, either," Harry protested, loyally; "he's just older than we are, that's all."

"How old is he?"

"Twenty-three."

"Older, my eye! I'm twenty-two, and if that makes him my grandfather, you—well, you can sing quarter tones."

Freddy was never long from Bill's thoughts that day. Chained power seemed tragic to him, and something, he felt, must be done to release the glorious power Freddy possessed but could not control. When evening came, he walked across the campus to the dormitory where Freddy lived. He didn't know what he was going to do or say, but he had made up his mind that he was going to do something.

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He knocked on the door. For a full minute there was silence. He knocked again. Listening intently, he could hear some one moving in the room. A third time he knocked, this time loudly and imperatively. The door opened and Freddy stood there looking miserably at Bill. He was so frightened, so craven, that for an instant Bill's sympathy died in a rush of contempt. He had never known fear, and fear so obvious and open as Freddy's was sickening to him.

"I—I," stuttered Freddy, weakly, "I—I can't go anywhere."

Bill did not know that Freddy thought he wanted to take him somewhere and get him drunk, but he did know that the boy thought he was harboring some unpleasant design against him.

Bill laughed. "I don't want to take you anywhere. I want to come in and talk."

Staring at him with wide, frightened eyes, Freddy backed away and Bill followed him into the room and closed the door. He was surprised to find himself confused and embarrassed. He hadn't expected such terror, and he knew now why Harry had said that Freddy was like a rabbit. There was the same shy, weak fear, the same trem-

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ulous urge to escape, the same pitiful lack of strength.

"I know I haven't any right to break in this way," Bill said, knowing that his voice sounded rough and unpleasant but unable for the moment to control it. "I've just come to say thanks for your singing last night." As Freddy continued to stare at him in the same fear-stricken manner, he found it hard to continue, but he forced himself to go on, trying hard to seem natural. "I'm no musician, but you gave me such a thrill I wanted to tell you about it."

Freddy's delicate skin turned a deep red. "I—I was drunk." His head sank. He was sick with shame.

Bill's laugh sounded like a cracked bell, and he flushed with anger at his own lack of poise. "I don't give a damn how drunk you were," he said, attempting to save the dead laugh with a hearty manner; "you sang wonderfully."

He paused. He didn't know what to say. Freddy was looking at his feet. The color had gradually left his face until only whiteness remained. Bill wished he hadn't come. You couldn't talk to anybody like this fellow. It was

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hard to believe that Freddy could sing; it was hard to believe that he could do anything.

Yet—Bill realized with surprise—strip Freddy of his hang-dog air and he would be handsome. He had everything but confidence. He was fairly tall, at least five foot ten, he had well-cut features, extraordinarily blue eyes with brown eyebrows and lashes, curly hair that was silky fine and yellow as pale gold, his skin was smooth, and there was warm color in his cheeks when he wasn't frightened, and he was athletically slender. At first Bill thought his mouth was weak, but later he knew that it was only sensitive, so sensitive that it shocked one to realize the capacity for pain it revealed.

It was his body, however, which surprised Bill. He had expected a weakling, but his experienced eye told him that Freddy must have strength decidedly above the average. His body was smaller than Bill's, but in no other respect was it inferior; he was an athlete if Bill had ever seen one. He had broad shoulders, long legs, flat hips, and a remarkably broad, deep chest. If Bill had known more about singing, that great chest would not have caused him so much astonishment; he

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would have known that a voice such as Freddy's never resounded in anything less impressive.

There was a long silence. Bill looked around the room to save himself the embarrassment of looking at Freddy. It was much the most attractive college room he had ever seen. The rug was a deep blue, most of the furniture mahogany, and all of it extremely simple in design. There was a colored block print over the mantel, one or two more on the other walls, and several etchings. There were three bookcases full of books, and in one corner an upright piano. The room revealed that Freddy had taste and the money with which to satisfy it. Freddy seemed to have everything except the confidence to make anything worth while.

Bill endured the silence as long as he could; then he blurted out: "Look here, Schiller, I want to talk to you. I know you're shy and—and all that, but you needn't act as if I were razzing you just because I came over to tell you how much I like your singing."

He was so ill at ease that he became boyish, and his lack of assurance seemed to encourage Freddy. At any rate, Freddy lifted his head and

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said softly, "I'm sorry. I thought you wanted to get me drunk."

"Well, if making you drunk would make you sing again, I'd be willing to, but that's not what I came for. I wanted to tell you I was grateful for last night—and I wanted to get acquainted." Bill flushed a little. This business was damnably hard; he wished he hadn't come.

"With me?" Freddy stared at him unbelievably, his blue eyes very round and boyish with surprise. He knew who his visitor was; he knew he was the great Bill Royce, the god of the football field, the scorner of class offices, honor societies, and the gaudiest fraternities; he knew it was Bill Royce, the most arrogant man on the campus, the fellow who never condescended to get acquainted with anybody. It was Bill Royce standing there in his room asking to know him. No wonder he stared. He didn't believe what he heard. Gods didn't ask favors of worms.

"Yes, of course with you. You didn't think I called to get acquainted with Prexie, did you?" Bill was getting back a little confidence. He gripped the back of a chair and said vigorously: "Listen here. I've a lot of work to do and, believe me, I didn't leave it and come over here

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to make a goat of you. I came because I want to know you, and I hope you'll be decent enough to let me. I wouldn't get sore if you asked me to sit down."

Then, unexpectedly, Freddy smiled. It was a sad smile, very gentle, pathetically shy, but there was sweetness in it and humor too. "I'm sorry," he apologized. "I'm rude." He pointed uncertainly to a chair. "Sit down. I—I'm glad to—to see you."

Bill smiled, too, and his usually stern face became very charming when he smiled. "I have a hunch, Freddy," he said, slumping easily into a chair, "that you're worth knowing—and if I sound snobbish, I don't mean to. I mean—oh, hell, it doesn't matter. I just hope you'll sit down yourself and be friendly. I want to talk, and you make me uncomfortable as the devil standing there and looking as if I were some sort of awful mistake."

"I—I can't talk. You're kind—but I can't. I—I wish I—oh, I can't!" The effort brought tears to Freddy's eyes, and again his head sank with shame.

Perhaps it was instinct that made Bill try football tactics, perhaps it was lack of experience; at

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any rate, whatever the cause, he gave up all attempts at soothing the boy and drove straight at him. He got up, strode over to Freddy, and gripped his shoulder.

"You're a damn fool," he said angrily. "You've got the most wonderful voice I've ever heard—and you're afraid to sing. I come in for a friendly visit—and you're afraid to talk. Well, goddamn it, you're going to talk." He loosened his hold and doubled up his fist. "If you go stuttering at me again, I'm going to give you this." The sternness in his voice and the brightness in his brown eyes were due to embarrassment rather than anger, but he was excited, too; he felt the same determination which always came to him when he was bucking a line which refused to yield.

Dumbfounded, Freddy drew back. If Bill had watched more closely, he would have seen that Freddy was not frightened of his fist, that he was merely astonished; but Bill thought he was shrinking—and he let drive. He hit Freddy sharply on the shoulder. Freddy staggered. A second later he was facing Bill, his fists clenched, his blue eyes shining fiercely through narrowed lids.

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"What did you do that for?" he asked softly.

"Because you're a damn fool."

"That's my business."

Bill felt exultant. Some blind instinct had made him do the right thing. Freddy was no longer shrinking, he wasn't afraid, he wasn't stuttering; he was just boiling angry and ready to fight. Bill continued the game.

"Perhaps it is, but if you go on acting like a scared bunny, I'll give you one on the jaw."

"*Don't!*" The command was so angry, so imperious, that Bill laughed. He slapped Freddy cheerfully on the back and cried, "All right, old man, I won't. That's over. Come on; let's talk. I apologize."

Freddy's hands slowly relaxed and slowly he smiled. He was shy again but not frightened. "What did you do that for?" he asked quietly.

"I don't know," Bill admitted. "I guess it was because I was so fussed I didn't know what else to do. I was going to talk to you if I had to beat you up to do it. I'm not a psychoanalyst but I did the right thing, just the same." He grinned amiably. "If you stutter again, I'm going to biff you one. Now sit down and be yourself."

Freddy looked at him, confusion in his eyes.

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"I don't understand it," he said thoughtfully. "I'm not scared of you. I know you can lick me, but I'm not scared. I guess I'm never scared physically."

"You can't be. I'm big enough to beat hell out of you, but you were ready to scrap. If you're not afraid of me, why do you let fellows pull you off on drunk parties?"

Freddy dropped to the davenport and faced the fireplace. "Because I want to go," he confessed. "I hate hard liquor—whisky and gin, I mean—but if I get drunk I can sing—sometimes. I'm afraid to go—and I want to go—oh, you know what I mean." He was still shy, still hesitant, but he wasn't stuttering and color had come back into his face. Relieved, Bill relaxed. Freddy could talk.

Gradually he got the boy's story from him. He came, it seemed, from a musical family. Both his mother and father were musicians, his father a conductor of a great orchestra and his mother a singer. From childhood he had been trained to be a musician, too. He had spoken both German and French before he knew English, and by the time he was ten he was fluent in Italian. To Bill he seemed extraordinarily polyglot. He

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had had years of Latin and Greek in school, and he was adding Spanish to the list. "I want to sing songs in their original languages, you see," he explained modestly. He couldn't remember when he hadn't studied music, and playing the piano seemed almost as instinctive to him as walking; yet he asserted that he wasn't a good pianist.

"It's curious," he said. "I can play anything, and yet I can't express what I want to except with my voice. When I'm playing, I feel the music in my throat." He neglected to tell Bill that he was also a competent performer on the violin and viola.

As a small boy he had sung in a famous boy choir in New York. "My voice wasn't wonderful," he said, "but I was better than the average boy soprano because I'd been better trained. I knew more about singing." When he was thirteen he was given a solo part in the Easter service. Until he mentioned that experience, he had talked almost naturally, but once again his shyness returned and Bill had to drag the story out of him. Bill was insistent, although he could see that Freddy was in agony; yet he felt that Freddy must tell the story if anything was to be accomplished. The boy's distress indicated that that

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Easter service was probably responsible for his tragic shyness.

Gradually the story came. He had been thrilled at the opportunity and had practiced hard. At first he had sung well—and then his voice had broken. He had tried to go on, but he could make no sound but a raucous croak. One of the boy singers tittered, and Freddy ran weeping from the choir. He shivered as he told Bill the story, and his face went white again. The memory was almost unendurably painful to him.

For three years he did not sing; indeed, he had given up all hope of ever singing. His voice refused to finish changing.

"What do you mean?" demanded Bill. "I grunted and squealed for a time while my voice was changing, but it didn't last very long."

Freddy looked at him and his very lips grew white. "I grunted and squealed for three years," he said bitterly. "I got so I was afraid to talk, and the boys ——" He broke off sharply, and it was only after long pleading that Bill got him to continue. The boys at school had made life hell for him. They laughed when he tried to recite, they snickered derisively when his voice broke, they teased him unmercifully and relentlessly.

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When he passed a schoolmate on the street, he was always greeted with a shrill falsetto, "Hello, Freddy!" He had whipped two and then given up. He couldn't whip the whole school. He lost his spirit; he didn't care about anything.

Then his mother began to give him singing lessons to see if she couldn't place his voice. The result was miraculous. In a month he could sing and talk naturally so long as he was with his own family; but in school the control of his voice deserted him. "I knew, though," he explained, "that it was just nervousness and I didn't care much. I knew that I was going to be all right, and I was so happy about singing I could stand the razzing."

That summer he had been taken to Paris and been put in charge of a great singing master. Once away from his usual environment, he lost his fear of speaking and singing, and by the time he returned to school, his voice was firmly under control.

"It was funny," he said, "the way the fellows acted. They looked surprised when I talked naturally, and in a week they'd all forgotten I'd ever talked any other way." He had studied singing all that winter with a New York teacher, and as

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his voice improved, his confidence returned. There had been a school concert and he promised to sing.

Again he grew reticent, and only Bill's insistence dragged the story out of him. He had repeated the Easter experience. Nervous and frightened, he had lost control of his voice. It had broken on him again—and the audience, composed mostly of high school children, had laughed, and the next day some of them had squealed, "Hello, Freddy!" as they had in earlier years.

After that experience his confidence left him. He had come to college in an effort to get it back. His parents had felt that in the camaraderie of college he would learn to move easily among people, but the experiment had been a failure. From the first he had been shy and branded as queer, and he felt the brand burn to the bone.

Bill's guess had been right, he found, regarding the psychoanalyst. "He seemed to think I was some sort of pervert," Freddy said bitterly. "I could have killed him." The man was probably a quack, Bill decided, but quack or honest, he had terrified the boy.

"What I can't understand," Bill said, "is that

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you can sing for your teachers but for nobody else."

"I'm used to them. They praise my voice and I feel sure of myself—but I can't face an audience."

Bill laughed. "You're full of hooey. You couldn't face me, either, a little while ago. You're just like most fellows before a football game. They're scared to death. It's all they can do to get out on the field. I've seen Harry Coombs cry like a baby. Then two minutes after the game starts, they forget all about being scared. You'll be the same way."

Freddy looked at him hopefully for a brief moment and then his face fell. "No," he contradicted sadly. "This is different."

"As different as one egg from another," Bill admitted. "Say, it's after midnight. I've got to go to bed." He rose and held out his hand, and, smiling, he said, "Remember, I'm going to beat hell out of you if you ever blush or stutter again when I'm around."

Freddy gripped his hand hard and looked at the floor. When he lifted his eyes, they were bright with tears. "I don't know how to thank

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you," he said softly. "Wait," he added quickly as Bill opened his lips to interrupt. "I know what you're going to say, but you're wrong. You've done something wonderful—and I'm so grateful that—that—oh, I don't know how to say it, but ——"

"Don't, please," Bill pleaded gently, red with embarrassment. "I haven't done anything really except put some iron in your backbone. I'm coming again—and the next time you're going to sing for me."

"Oh, I couldn't! I ——"

"You're a liar. You can. And that reminds me. If anybody tries to drag you off on a souse party, beat them up."

"But ——"

"But you can sing without getting slopped," Bill affirmed vigorously. "Beat them up."

Freddy smiled and released Bill's hand. "You sound," he said shyly, "as if you'd taken charge of me."

"I have—and if you get drunk except for fun, I'll beat hell out of you. Good night, old man."

"Good night."

When the door closed behind Bill, Freddy

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stood still for a moment, and then his head went up with a snap and he began to stride around the room. "God!" he cried, lifting his arms high above his head. "God! God—oh, God! I talked—I talked!"

CHAPTER XIII

WITHIN two weeks the whole campus was talking about Bill Royce and Freddy Schiller. It was plain that Bill, who never had time for anybody apparently, had time for Freddy. He never paid any attention to any of his teammates on the football team except Harry Coombs; he ignored "the men who really matter" to take up with the "queerest bird on the campus." When one self-conscious wit heard a remark to that effect, he said proudly, "Well, why not? Royce is a circus exhibit himself. You wouldn't expect him to roost with anything but another freak, would you?"

Behind the criticism there was a great deal of envy; indeed, envy was responsible for most of the criticism. The majority of the students would have sacrificed much to have been friends with Bill; at one time or another many of them had made attempts to be, but only Harry had succeeded. There were plenty of fellows at Raleigh for whom Bill had a casual liking and whom he

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was glad to chat with occasionally, but he did not desire any relationship more intimate. He was always courteous and pleasant, but he was reserved and rather unbending. If a man called at his room, the man was received politely but he departed feeling that he had taken Bill away from work which he wanted very much to do. Since Bill much preferred his books to chatter about athletics or campus politics, the impression he gave his rare visitors was entirely accurate.

The students envied Freddy and they envied Bill. They envied Freddy because he was obviously becoming Bill's friend, and they envied Bill because he was exactly the sort of person most of them wanted to be. He was handsome, he was fearless, he was a great athlete, and he had an air. They even envied him his superiority to their gods. It took "*some* man" to thumb his nose indifferently to everything his comrades worshiped. They envied him his indifference and hated him for it. The campus was definitely hostile to Bill, but he could have turned the hostility into adoration by one week of back-slapping.

His interest in Freddy Schiller intensified the hostility. He seemed to have ignored far better men to take up with Freddy, and there were few

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men at Raleigh who did not consider themselves Freddy's superior. Practically none of the boys understood the kindliness back of his interest; most of them felt that it was merely another evidence of his flaunting of Raleigh standards. Bill, they were sure, had chosen Freddy for a friend simply because Freddy wasn't "regular." It would have surprised them overwhelmingly if they had been told that Bill was as humble before Freddy's gifts as they were humble before his.

Tenny Morris, however, guessed the situation. He stopped Bill on the campus one day and expressed his admiration for what Bill had accomplished.

"Say, Royce," he said in his sharp way, "tell me about Schiller."

"What do you mean?" Bill asked, not altogether pleasantly. He didn't like Morris's manner. It was entirely too imperious.

"What have you done to him? I've seen him with you twice and he was talking like a human being. And yesterday I passed him and said hello and he actually answered without falling down. He blushed and stuttered as usual, but he answered—and that's more than he's ever done

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before. What kind of magic have you used?" The compliment was rendered nil by the brusque fashion in which Tenny asked the question. He was a little afraid Bill might snub him and he was on the defensive. Being a sensitive person, he usually wore an armor of sarcasm.

"I haven't done anything," Bill answered, "except treat him like a human being—something nobody else seems to have thought of doing."

"That's not so," Tenny contradicted angrily. "I tried my best to be friends with him and he wouldn't let me. I know as well as you do he's remarkable. I may even know better. You've managed to get past his shyness. I wish you'd tell me how you did it. I want to myself."

Tenny was small, and Bill looked down at him curiously. "I have a feeling, Tenny," he said slowly, having decided to be good-humored, "that your bark is worse than your bite. You and I are different sorts of animals, but that's no reason you should snarl at me when we meet. I'll tell you about Freddy if you want me to, but don't act as if I had done you a dirty trick by making friends with him."

Tenny flushed. "I'm sorry," he said, frankly ashamed and very much embarrassed. "I didn't

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mean to be nasty. I do feel, though, as if you'd gypped me. I'd rather know Freddy than anybody else on the campus. It isn't just his voice, either. I've stood out in the hall and listened to him play the piano, and Dr. Corley showed me a couple of his papers in English 38. He must be wonderful."

"He is. Come on and walk down town with me. I've got to go to lunch." Bill turned, and as they strolled across the campus together, he told Tenny about his first and subsequent talks with Freddy Schiller. "It's wonderful," he said, "how he's opened up since that first time. I haven't got him to sing yet, but I will. He'd like to know you, I think. Anyway, he told me you played the fiddle beautifully for a college fellow."

"Did he?" Tenny asked eagerly, his cheeks turning pink, his eyes shining with pleasure. "Will you take me around?" He was no longer superior and carefully mature. He was too excited to be ashamed of his excitement.

"Of course. I think it would be great for Freddy. Bring your fiddle. You can play some duets."

They arranged to call on Freddy together the next night and separated at the post-office. Tenny

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was happy in the arrangement and grateful to Bill, but he thought resentfully, as he walked down the street, "I don't like that fellow. He's pleasant enough and he must be big-hearted to do what he's done for Freddy—and he's intelligent all right, but—he's got a shell. Damn it, he makes me feel like a kid."

The call taxed Bill's social diplomacy to the limit, and inasmuch as he had almost none, the strain was rather terrible. Freddy was shy, cruelly embarrassed, and Tenny was almost as uncomfortable. The two of them were like frightened children, and Bill felt like a clumsy duck which had hatched out timorous chickens incapable of swimming. Finally he blurted out:

"You two fellows make me sick. You want to know each other and you sit there like a couple of scared kids and stutter." Both boys promptly turned purple, and Tenny could gladly have killed him. Bill knew he had taken the wrong road and, confused by his error, blundered into the right one.

"Oh, hell, if you can't talk, for God's sake, play!" he cried irritably. "Go ahead, Tenny; get out your fiddle."

Music was a language both Freddy and Tenny

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spoke fluently, and after they had played a couple of duets, their embarrassment lessened and they found their tongues. Bill announced that he had some studying to do, said good night, and departed. Once in the hall, he breathed deeply, and thought, "Thank the lord, that's over. I hope to God I'm struck dead if I ever start nursing a psychopathic genius again."

His interest in Freddy, however, did not abate, but he and Tenny could not be friends. Tenny was afraid of him and always had his claws out, and Bill always had an impulse to knock the caustic little fellow several feet from where he was standing. Having no nerves himself, he could not sympathize with Tenny's, and being thoroughly wholesome and not very imaginative, he disliked Tenny's morbid passion for erotic literature. Bill delighted in Rabelais and thought Van Vechten was dirty; Tenny said that Van Vechten was delightful and that Rabelais was coarse. Men whose tastes differed so widely could hardly be friends.

Until the end of the term they tolerated each other because of their mutual interest in, and liking for, Freddy, but Bill was not sorry that Tenny would take his degree in June. Some-

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times he didn't know which he disliked more, the athletic worshipping undergraduates who furnished the norm or the self-consciously superior esthetes, represented at their best by Tenny. Harry Coombs was a relief from either, although Harry was in no way remarkable. He was just healthy and wholesome and jolly and loyal.

It was curious, Bill often thought, how little ability it took to be outstanding at Raleigh. Harry furnished a perfect example. He wasn't very good looking—indeed, he was homely—he was only moderately intelligent, he was musically ignorant, and he was mediocre as an athlete; yet he would undoubtedly be elected to Phi Beta Kappa in his senior year, he had won two scholarships, he belonged to both the glee club and the banjo club, he had “made” the best fraternity on the campus, he was secretary of his class, already a member of two honor societies, and would eventually be captain of the football team if Bill wasn't. Besides, he had his letter in baseball and said he was thinking of “going out” for basket ball in his junior year. He was far and away the most prominent man in the sophomore class. He did nothing remarkably well, but he did everything with great enthusiasm and zest. He was modest

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and likable; he had a smile for everybody, and he believed earnestly in the cosmic importance of everything he did. Bill, who had studied with him, knew that he only skimmed his books. He had no time to go into them deeply, no time to think about what he was reading, and Bill often thought he had little curiosity about it. Unlike many of the boys, he did not aspire merely to "get by," but he didn't aspire either to get the education which was being offered to him. He wanted good grades because they made him feel pleased with himself and because they pleased his family.

Bill did not like Tenny and he was deeply attached to Harry; yet he knew that Tenny was Harry's superior. He even guessed that Tenny's nasty curiosity was indicative of a stronger intelligence than Harry's casual indifference to the sins of the world. Harry wasn't curious enough. He accepted things too easily, and it was his easy acceptance of things at Raleigh, his ready belief that it was the greatest of colleges with the noblest of traditions which had much to do with his popularity. Except for his splendid honesty and fine generosity, he was mediocre in every way, and it was his mediocrity that gave him his distinction.

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He fitted into the college scheme without a single irritating wrinkle, he made no one feel inferior, he never offended by clear-sighted criticism; he would probably be awarded the medal given each year to the senior voted "the most representative Raleigh man."

As Bill thought about Harry at the end of his sophomore year, he began to wonder if college was worth the effort it was taking. He loved Harry but he didn't care to set him up as an ideal, and he came near to being the ideal at Raleigh. He was the sort of man President Stanton admired and extolled at every opportunity, the sort of man the students adored and the faculty praised; he was the sort of man whom the college delighted to honor.

True, there were professors who held intelligence higher than good fellowship, but they were usually the professors who put one to sleep. Those professors praised Bill and he rather resented their praise. They had a superior way of letting him know that his work surprised them; they hadn't expected an athlete to be intelligent. And Bill, being an athlete, despised their weak eyes, skinny legs, or pendulous paunches. He wondered often why a strong mind and a strong

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body couldn't go together. There was one professor at Raleigh who seemed to have both, but most of the professors who swam in the college tank or played golf or tennis were not noted for their scholarly attainments, and those who had distinguished themselves scholastically were mostly sad physical specimens. He understood perfectly the common-undergraduate idea that "most profs weren't human." Like many other students, he was occasionally startled when he realized that most of them were fathers. They must create their children, he thought, by a mental effort.

He was in an unhappy mood when vacation came. He felt that he had been getting high grades and little else. In three terms only two B's marred his record of A's, but he took no pride in the grades. He knew that he could have won the same grades by learning far less than he had, and his eagerness to learn was often stifled by the dullness of his professors.

He sometimes thought that Freddy Schiller was teaching him more than any professor had. Freddy had lived all his life with unusual and brilliant people, he had traveled widely and intelligently, he was uncommonly well-read, and

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he was interesting. College had given him Freddy, it had given him Harry—and in some ways he treasured Harry more than he did the far more brilliant Freddy—and it was giving him a supply of facts and a few ideas. He wondered if he couldn't get those without paying tuition. They all seemed to be in books.

Ah, well, he reasoned, he was tired and perhaps unnecessarily pessimistic. He had expected more from college. Maybe he would find it during his junior and senior years. He would give it a chance, anyway. It was enough that vacation was here—and he would see Patricia.

CHAPTER XIV

A LETTER came from Patricia the day before Bill's last two examinations. He did so badly in those two examinations that he received C's in the courses. The grades did not disturb him. At first he was a little irritated because the professors had ignored a semester's excellent work and judged him by a test which had lasted three hours, but grades meant almost nothing to him, and those C's might very well save him from an embarrassing situation; they might prevent his election to Phi Beta Kappa in his junior year, and he would be very glad indeed if they did. Phi Beta Kappa hardly seemed an honor to him; too many dull grinds wore its key to make it seem the symbol of intellectual distinction it was supposed to be. He didn't want to accept membership in an organization he did not particularly respect, but he knew that a refusal to accept it would cause a distinctly unpleasant storm of gossip and condemnation. He was a little tired of being considered queer. Besides, he had little sympathy

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with the men who had declined the key; he felt that they had insisted a little too publicly on their own intellectual superiority. He didn't consider himself very superior, but he didn't care to belong to a fraternity which estimated largely the intellectual worth of its members on the grades they received. If the key were offered to him, he would accept it, but he hoped it wouldn't be offered. Perhaps a few more C's and a couple of D's would furnish a neat solution to the problem. A failure in an unimportant course would certainly avert the honor. He decided to write poorer tests in the future, and he was grateful to Patricia for giving him the idea. That, however, was the only grain of comfort he could extract from her letter.

He had stopped short when he entered his room and found the letter lying on the floor. Her handwriting seemed to blaze up at him. His heart was pounding and his hand trembled as he stooped to pick up the envelope. Not until then did he realize how much she meant to him, how he had never ceased loving her, wanting her, longing for her.

The sight of the letter lifted him to the stars; the reading of it flung him headlong into the

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depths. Patricia was leaving the next day for ten weeks in Europe. She would be home, she wrote, the second week in September and she would be glad to see him then if he cared to come to Larchmont for a brief visit. "I'm not asking you to stay with us," she wrote, "because my family would not consider that proper. My family comes from Boston and has Boston ideas." Nevertheless, she would see him as much as he liked and she hoped he would find it in his heart to want to see her too.

The disappointment killed all thought of examinations. Study was impossible, but he didn't need to study; he was amply prepared. He did badly because he could not think of the questions when the time came to answer them; he could think only of Patricia. For the first time he was completely sure that he was in love with her. Unable to see her, the necessity to see her became overwhelming. He hadn't known how eagerly he had been waiting for vacation, how passionately hungry he had been for the sight of her face, the touch of her hand. The disappointment was bitter. Well, he'd have to wait a couple of months more, and in the meantime he had his tuition to earn. The old job with the Stedman

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Company was waiting. He'd better tackle it and try to forget Patricia a little longer. Depressed, he said good-by to Harry and Freddy and left the campus without a backward glance.

The summer was like the previous summer had been—plenty of work, a weak attempt to take up old friendships which seemed to matter less and less, a few conscientious calls on relatives who mattered not at all, and a feeling that everything he was doing was quite useless, a mere marking of time until he finished college and began work that really had a goal. He wasn't just to the work he was doing; it was the work he always wanted to do, but he couldn't feel a part of the foreign department when he was with it only three months out of the year.

Several letters from Freddy Schiller furnished the only change. Freddy was, as usual, studying in Paris, and he wrote with an enthusiasm and zest that made Bill proud. "I'll sing for you when I get back," he wrote happily; "I'll sing for everybody. That's a promise. I suppose I'll always be shy, Bill, but thanks to you—and God knows I can never thank you enough—I'm not terrified any more. I've got my courage back. I'm meeting new people and talking to them. I

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sang at an informal party the other night. I was scared but I went through with it. I didn't know life could be so good. I feel as lyrical as Shelley. If I weren't so damned American, I'd bawl my eyes out with thankfulness. As it is, I want to but don't. Maybe I'll surprise myself some day and do it. I swear I hope so."

Twice Bill tried to dispel his depression by making love to pretty girls. He found that they made him very weary. He cared nothing about them—and he wished to heaven September would come and with it Patricia.

Eventually September did come, and in the third week he stopped work and boarded a train for New York. Once in his room in a hotel, he hurried to the telephone and called Patricia's home. "Yes, Miss Roberts was there," the maid said. "Who was calling, please?"

A minute later he heard Patricia's voice—and he could feel his heart beating in his throat. At that moment he experienced the greatest happiness he had ever known, and the happiness stayed with him as the train bore him to Larchmont. It seemed as if he couldn't wait to get there; the train was an express to New Rochelle and Larchmont was only one stop beyond—yet he would

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have sworn that it crawled. When after an eternity it did reach Larchmont, he rushed for a taxi, gave the address, and breathlessly pleaded with the driver to hurry.

It was two days before he noticed that the house was large and beautiful; that day he saw only Patricia, and when she walked into the room where the maid had left him waiting, he stood silent and still, frozen with emotion. He had forgotten how lovely she was, how queenly, how wholesome and sweet; he had forgotten that she was to be desired above riches or fame or knowledge. And now as he looked at her he forgot everything but the desire to take her in his arms; he was so weak with longing he could not move.

She came slowly toward him holding out her hand.

"Bill," she said softly, "it's good to see you—so good."

He could say nothing. He could only hold her hand and stare hungrily at her.

"Don't look at me that way," she ordered gently, "or I'll forget a promise I've made to myself. I'm not a ghost or a wraith or an angel; I'm just Pat Roberts, Bill, and I'm so happy to see you that I'm either going to laugh or cry—

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and if you don't quit looking at me that way, I'll do both."

Bill shook his head and grinned. "I think I'll do both myself," he said slowly, "if you don't let me kiss you."

She drew her hand out of his tight clasp and said firmly, "No, Bill—not yet. Later maybe. Don't ask again, please. When I'm ready, I'll say so." She smiled. "You know that. I did before." She sat down and motioned to a chair beside her. "Sit down and be good. I've got dozens of questions I want to ask, and several volumes that I want to say—and will you please quit looking at me that way?"

Bill sat down in the chair she had indicated and smiled dazedly. "I just can't believe you're you. I thought I knew just how wonderful you were—and I'd forgotten entirely. Have you grown lovelier or what?"

Patricia laughed. "Well, since I got dreadfully sunburned sitting on the sun deck and my nose is peeling, I imagine you've either grown nearsighted or learned tact. I hope you haven't done either. I always liked your frankness."

Bill was so moved and excited and happy that he didn't care if her nose was peeling; in fact,

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he said flippantly that he didn't care if her whole face was moulting, it was still the most beautiful face he'd ever seen. He said a great many other things which were slightly hyperbolical, but Patricia enjoyed the exaggerations openly, and he meant every word he said. The afternoon flashed by with the speed of light, and he accepted an invitation to dinner with such unashamed eagerness that Patricia laughed.

"Laugh away," he said. "I'd have been broken-hearted if you hadn't asked me—and I don't care who knows it."

He stayed in New York for a week and called on Patricia daily. They went sailing together, swimming together, twice to the theater, and riding in Patricia's car through all the highways and byways of Westchester County. It was a golden week for Bill, but not pure gold; there was an alloy of doubt. Patricia was holding back. He had asked her over and over again to marry him, and each time she had demurred, hesitated, asked him to wait. She seemed as frank as ever, as direct and honest, but he felt that she wasn't telling him all she thought. He had to know what was wrong; he had to have his answer.

Eventually his last night came and they spent

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it lying on the sands of the beach. It was a warm night, and Patricia wore a pink dress which was as pale and delicate as an apple blossom. She looked very fresh and cool, but for some reason which Bill could not define, she seemed more regal than ever—somehow reserved and unapproachable. Her hair and eyes seemed blacker in the dim light of a waning moon, her nose more imperious, her mouth prouder. She had never been more beautiful, and he was a little afraid of her.

"Bill," she said, after they had lain on the sand for a time and talked of unimportant things, "I want to ask you a question."

He propped himself on one elbow and stared at her questioningly. "Shoot," he commanded briefly.

"Why do you play football?"

The question surprised him but he answered it clearly and honestly: "Why, because I'm paid to, of course."

"I thought so."

"Why?"

"I saw you play once last year." She was very quiet, apparently merely making conversation, but both her question and her manner disturbed Bill.

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"You were easily the star of the game, and yet you didn't thrill me. I know Harry doesn't compare with you, but I'd rather watch him play. Of course, I'm just a spectator, not an expert. My interest is in the drama of the game—not in its technique. Harry says you could make All-American if you wanted to, and I suppose he's right, but from my point of view your play lacks something."

For the first time since he had been in college Bill actively resented criticism of his football playing. "I suppose," he said sarcastically, "I don't break my neck often enough and then fight to go on playing for dear old Raleigh. I'm afraid I'll never be a hero, Patricia, because I honestly haven't any desire to die for Raleigh. I don't even want to break a leg for her—and if I seemed to work harder, I probably wouldn't make so much yardage. No, you're not an expert." He was piqued and disappointed; he hadn't expected Patricia to turn rah-rah.

"I'm afraid you don't understand. I know enough to know that one of the marks of a great athlete is the ease with which he plays. No, that's not it." Patricia paused a moment and then continued quietly, "I saw a professional football

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game once. The men seemed to play just as hard as college players do, but the game lacked drama, somehow. Finally I decided why. They played hard but without passion—and there can't be much drama if there isn't passion. That's what I miss in your playing. You don't care enough."

"Of course I don't!" he cried, irritated. "I left that sort of thing behind in high school. I like to play football, but I'll be damned if I can take it as a holy mission. The hysteria about it makes me sick. I was willing to break my neck when I was in high school, but I'm not eighteen any more. You certainly surprise me. I didn't think *you'd* take football seriously."

"I don't." She was apparently calm but she was very much in earnest. "But I take you seriously, and your football reveals a lot about you. You're the one who takes it seriously, not I. You take it as a job, and a job is a serious business to you. I take it as a game, and there's no fun in a game unless you throw yourself into it heart and soul. You play for money. I think you'd get more pleasure if you played for fun—and if you did, you wouldn't care much whether you broke a leg or not, you'd want to win so hard."

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"That seems childish to me," Bill objected, trying hard not to show how deeply he resented the criticism.

"I was afraid it would—and—" she hesitated, looked at him, looked down, and then, looking at him again, continued quietly, "—and that's the reason, Bill, I'm not going to marry you."

"*What?*" Startled and terrified, he sat up with a jerk. "What? Say that again."

"I said," she repeated gently, her voice as velvety as ever but firm as steel, "that that's the reason I'm not going to marry you."

"What do you mean?" he cried, desperate with confusion. "You're not going to marry me because I won't be childish about football? You don't mean that, Patricia—you—why, that's silly."

"Don't get excited—please, Bill. Let me explain. Lie down there again and be quiet. Maybe I can make you understand." Bill was too aroused and too frightened to notice that she was controlling herself only with the greatest effort; she too was moved and, if he had only known it, a little frightened.

Slowly he relaxed and leaned on his elbow again. She lowered her eyes a moment, then looked straight at him and said, "I've never

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trusted your attraction for me. You've had it from the first, but something was always lacking—and I didn't know what it was. I fell in love with you so quickly, so overwhelmingly, that I knew it couldn't be love—not the kind of love to get married on, anyway. We might be mates, but I wasn't sure we were partners. Do you see what I mean?"

"Yes, but ——"

"I know. You don't see what your football playing has to do with us being partners. Give me time and I'll explain. I worshiped you that day we were lost in the storm. You were magnificent. I wasn't frightened for an instant until you left me. I had perfect faith in your strength and courage. Well, strength and courage mean a lot—and you've got more than any man I've ever known. I admire you, Bill. You don't know how much—but I couldn't live with you. You—you can't play, you see."

"Play?" he stared at her confusedly. She seemed to be saying that the world must be propped up with toys. He had none to offer, and so the bottom had dropped out. He felt weak, incapable of thought. Never had he known such

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weakness. He wanted to talk, to protest, expostulate, but he hadn't the power to think or speak.

"Yes. You can't play. I don't mean you're without humor, because you're not—but you take even games seriously—not as games, I mean. You criticize college unmercifully, but you take it seriously. You're not willing for boys to be boys; you're not willing to be a boy yourself. You're not fifty—you're just twenty-four. Life's a struggle to you, Bill. I couldn't stand that. It has to be a pleasure to me. I'm willing to suffer pain for the experience, but —— No, that won't explain what I mean. Let me put it this way: you're so serious about the technique of living that you don't live. You ——"

"I'm going to live," he broke in passionately. "I'm learning to now. That's what college is for."

"Yes," she agreed almost coldly, "but you scorn all the play in college." She wondered afterward how she could have been so calm. She felt as if she were debating an academic question, not the most important decision of her life. She was far more excited intellectually than emotionally; her mind was like a strong hand gripping her heart and holding it quiet. "You've forgot-

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ten how to play already." She paused. "You're always quoting Browning. Do you know 'The Grammarian's Funeral'?"

"Yes. Of course. I like it." He was impatient, angry. Why all this high-brow discussion? Did she think that was love? Love wasn't talking about Browning and football; it was feeling. He started to say so when she interrupted gently.

"Wait. You'll see what I mean in a minute. The Grammarian gave up living for his job, and Browning makes a hero out of him. Maybe he was, but I like Browning better when he says to seize the moment. You take college as seriously as the Grammarian took his grammar. You ——"

"Do you want me to take it as a four years' loaf the way most fellows do?" he broke in indignantly. He sat up and spoke passionately. "This is all pretty enough for you to say—but you don't know. You didn't sell papers on the streets when you were a little kid. You've always had money. I haven't. I know what it is to worry yourself sick for fear your mother won't have the care she needs or she'll die. Why, there were times when I was afraid I couldn't even buy food for her. I was in debt for years—and I started being in debt when I was eighteen. Try to

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figure that out. You can't. You don't know anything about it. Well, I do.

"And I know what it is to be stopped because you haven't the education you need—and I know what it is to work like a fool and not get anywhere. It's easy enough for you to say to play. God, don't you suppose I want to play? Don't you suppose I'm going to when I can? I've *got* to work now. I want to marry you. How can I if I don't work? My boss has promised to help me get a good job when I get my degree. I can get somewhere then, and I'll be ready for the right kind of people—your kind. Oh, Patricia, can't you understand? Listen, dear. I love you—I love you better than anything on earth. You're dearer than the world to me. I'll give up everything for you—everything, but don't say no—please, Patricia."

His voice broke and he reached pleadingly for her hand. Patricia pressed his hand gently and then rose slowly to her feet. "Don't say any more now, Bill," she whispered, tears in her voice. "Please, please."

Unhappily he rose, too, and walked silently to her home beside her. When they reached the door she said, "I don't think we understand each

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other, Bill. I can't see your point of view and you can't see mine. It seems a little thing, but I don't think it is. I don't think we'd better see each other again until one of us changes. Maybe I will. I don't know. I'm just as unhappy as you are—but don't—oh, please, don't make it harder."

Bill made it very much harder. He protested until he knew further protests were useless. She was gentle, but her firmness never wavered. Her life was too precious to her, she insisted, to risk it on what seemed a certain gamble. All marriage was a gamble, he said. She granted the argument but insisted that it wasn't a good gamble unless you were sure you were going to win when you threw the dice. She wasn't sure and so she refused to make the throw.

When he left her, he was hurt and despondent, but by the time he got back to New York he was angry; he was blazing with rage. He didn't take the night train to Raleigh as he should have; instead he took the train home the next morning, and his rage stayed with him. There were girls at home. They had wearied him only a few weeks before, but now they danced enticingly in

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his imagination, seductive, glorious, as glamorous as revenge. He was going to play—*play!*

But he didn't. His intention seemed childish by the time the long ride was over, stupid and vulgar. He didn't want play or revenge or any girl. He wanted. . . . That was the worst of it; he didn't know what he wanted. Was there anything in the world, he wondered, worth wanting?

CHAPTER XV

BILL reached Raleigh at twilight, and for the first time he really saw the beauty of the college. He never knew quite why the campus seemed so beautiful to him that evening; maybe it was because he was tired and in a dreamy mood, maybe it was because he was unhappy and the campus laid a soothing finger on the sore spot in his heart, and maybe something had happened to him which made him more sensitive to beauty. He didn't think of the last reason. He didn't think he had been made more sensitive; he thought he had been made harder, more callous to everything romantic than he had ever been before.

Through the twilight haze, as soft as a veil and as magic as a dream, the campus took on the mystery of something remote, something imagined. An early frost had touched the ivy and turned it into an irregular pattern of jeweled leaves flattened against the mellow brick buildings. Against the white chapel a sumach burned red, and near it a maple dripped red and yellow

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leaves. Even the green of the elms was softened with yellow tints—and behind the buildings the hills rose, purple through the blue haze, flaming with great splashes of carmen and burnt orange. As Bill walked lazily across the campus, the colors slowly faded; the street lights blazed suddenly and blotted them out. He felt wearily at peace when he entered his dormitory.

That night as he was returning to his room from dinner, some one gripped his arm.

“Bill!” said a voice. “Bill, old man.”

He turned and looked into Freddy Schiller’s shining, happy eyes. He held out his hand and Freddy gripped it. There was a lump in Bill’s throat. A dozen men had waved to him or said hello in the cafeteria, but this was the first time he had been really welcomed. He needed welcome badly—more than he knew. Though he did not realize it, affection was as necessary to him then as meat and drink. All the old loneliness was on him and it was blacker than ever. Before he had been lonely because he was alone; now he was lonely because of what he had lost. For a brief time his life had been full; now, suddenly, it was drained empty. Man’s heart,

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like nature, abhors a vacuum, and the emptiness in Bill's heart ached.

"I'm so damn glad to see you," Freddy cried. "I never was so glad to see anybody. Did you have a good summer?"

"Hellish," Bill replied curtly. "Let's not talk about it. Tell me about yours."

"Come over to the room, then. I've got a fire going and we can talk and—oh, damn it, Bill, I'm crazy to sing for you." Freddy was embarrassed but he managed to blurt out his desire; he said it as if it were a confession.

"You can bet I'm crazy to hear you sing," Bill said heartily, but he felt uninterested and almost unbearably weary as he walked slowly across the campus with Freddy. He was glad to be with the boy, glad that he was so happy, and he was glad that he was going to sing for him; but the gladness was weak, as if it didn't have the strength to reach its own aspiration. Freddy didn't matter, his singing didn't matter; nothing mattered.

He managed to appear interested while Freddy told of his summer, how he had sung repeatedly for strangers, how his masters had praised him, and how wonderful it had been to feel strong

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and alive. "At first I wasn't coming back to college," he said, "because you gave me what I'd come for, but then I made up my mind I would come back; I'm going ——"

"Yes?" Bill prompted as Freddy flushed and hesitated. "You're going to do what?"

"I'm going to make this college eat its opinion of me. I'm going to sing every chance I get—and I've studied fencing and boxing and swimming ever since I can remember, and I'm going to walk out of this place with three letters." Freddy's cheeks were pink with determination and his eyes were blue fire.

"Good!" Bill cried, honestly admiring. "But don't go out for boxing, Freddy; your nose is too valuable."

Now that pride and confidence had poured their life-giving strength into Freddy, he was handsome. The hang-dog air was all gone; there was color in his oval cheeks, sparkle in his eyes, nervous decision in his movements, and determination in his mouth. It was still sensitive but it no longer suggested weakness; it was proud. Freddy was reborn, and Bill, tired and unhappy though he was, felt a little surge of pride as he looked at the boy.

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"My nose?" laughed Freddy. "What do I care about my nose?"

"Not a thing, I suppose, but your press agent will some day. I don't know much about it, but I have a hunch a good straight nose like yours won't hurt the public's opinion of your voice—and a smashed one won't make them think any better of it. Go ahead and fence and swim but leave boxing alone. Don't take any chances with these amateur fighters. They never know where they're going to hit."

Freddy was disappointed. He had an active desire to beat up a few of his former disdainers, and a boxing contest or two would furnish ample excuses. He was very sensitive, very emotional, artistic to his finger tips, but, in the end, he was just normally American. After half an hour's argument with Bill, he gave in, and then after no urging at all, he sat down at the piano and began to sing.

A crowd soon formed in the hall and below the window, but neither he nor Bill knew that they were not alone. Freddy sang on and Bill drooped in his chair before the fire. His mind was a haze of memories, and the music stirred them into patterns, each sadder than the last. As

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Freddy wove a spell with the magic of Schubert's music, Bill saw the vaguely shifting shadow dream that was his life—work and work and more work. His mother and her pain. She was gone, gone. . . . His friends—they were gone, too. College had done nothing but take them away from him; their interests were different from his now, they had grown apart. . . . Gone—everybody was gone. . . . Patricia. . . . *Patricia!* Gone, too. She was gone. . . . Because he wanted all that life could give she had sent him away—and now he didn't have her; now he could never have anything. . . .

His head sank into his hands. Freddy looked at him and hesitated. Something was wrong with Bill, but he couldn't ask what it was. His fingers wandered among the piano keys and seemed to find the beginning of a Chopin nocturne of their own accord, and when he had played that through, he sang a few folk songs and then turned on the bench.

"That's enough, I think," he said softly. "I'm tired, and I guess you are, too."

Bill looked up, his brown eyes clouded, his usually firm mouth sagging.

"Yes," he said, "I'm awfully tired. But I'm

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grateful to you, Freddy. I've been a little blue and your music did me a lot of good. I don't suppose you know how wonderfully you sing."

"I don't," Freddy admitted gayly. "I've got lots to learn. I don't care now, though, how much it is; I'll learn it."

As the term got under way, Bill learned that a new year did not mean new opportunities for him but new enemies. This was his third year, and it was merely an intense repetition of the other two. Two sets of seniors who had disliked him were gone, but two sets of freshmen had come to take their places, and the freshmen disliked him more than the seniors had. His aloofness, his indifference to the college gods, his general "queerness," were already traditional; he was held up to the incoming men as a perfect example of all a true Raleigh man should not be. When he entered college, the seniors and juniors had given him a chance; with the freshmen he had none, and the more the upperclassmen saw of him, the more they disliked him.

Bill seriously considered dropping football, but in the end he decided that he would be both a coward and a fool to give it up. He was keen enough to see that his attitude toward football

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was largely responsible for his unpopularity, and that his one chance for the oblivion he craved was to resign from the squad. There would be a tremendous hullabaloo, of course, but once it had died down, he would be forgotten almost as completely as if he had never existed. It would be easier for the college boys to forgive a traitor than it was for them to forgive an un-godlike hero. His logic was probably wrong, but he believed in it and was ashamed to give into it. Football provided the money for his education, and if he gave up the game because it made him unpopular, he would be a coward; and if he gave up such an easy means of earning a living, he would be a fool. He reported for practice, wishing heartily at times that he would break a leg.

In the first game of the season against a weak team he made a fifty-yard run to a touchdown. There was a spontaneous burst of enthusiasm from the bleachers—and then a curious silence. Bill paid no attention; he was busy kicking the goal. Then the cheer leader called indifferently on his minions for “a big Raleigh for Bill Royce.” The leader, Bob Nelson, disliked Bill intensely, and he asked for the cheer in a lackadaisical manner which gave the cue to the students. If it had

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been a normal cheer, most of the players, including Bill, would never have heard it; but it was so lifeless, so uninspired, that the whole team looked in surprise at the cheering section. It was a deliberate insult, public and unmistakable. A second later more than half the students were ashamed of themselves and furious with Nelson for having inspired them to such a display of bad manners. They waited anxiously for Bill to make another play which would give them an opportunity to apologize with noisy cheering. The opportunity did not come. Afraid that the insult might be repeated and sure of winning the game, Sam Ross took Bill out of the line-up and sent him to the showers.

No member of the team, not even Harry Coombs, dared mention the incident to Bill. Nelson had called for a cheer when he left the game, and it had been hearty enough to console him if he had been in a mood to be consoled, but his contempt had at last flared into hatred, and any cheer, however hearty, was only fuel to the flame of his hate. He was definitely at war with Raleigh College, and he made up his mind never to grant an armistice regardless of how often the enemy cried for peace.

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After the game, Sam Ross and Martin Jenkins paid a call on Bob Nelson, and that young man listened to a duet of contempt and condemnation which made his young ears burn. He tried to blame the insult on the students, but Jenkins happened to have been sitting next to the cheering section and he knew exactly where the blame lay.

"If Royce walks out on us," Ross said angrily, "we're licked. The whole team's built around him—damn near every play. And he's just proud enough to walk out, and, if you ask me, I won't blame him if he does. You belly-ache to the boys about not getting behind the team—and then you ask them to whisper a cheer for a fifty-yard run. You're a hell of a cheer leader, you are."

"The fellows don't like Royce," Nelson protested. "He walks around with his nose in the air as if he were a little god."

"So far as the team's concerned," Ross roared, "he's a damn big god. He knows more football than all the rest of them together—and he's worth more to us than fifty penny-in-the-slot cheer leaders. Just who in hell do you think you are, anyway?"

"You've got a job, Bob," Jenkins said sternly, "that is of mighty little importance as long as it's

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done right, but when it's done as wrong as you do it, it's hideously important; it's downright tragic. When Royce made that run, the fellows cheered for him. I'll admit they'd have cheered more if they'd liked him—but they shut up suddenly because you turned your back on them and acted as if nothing had happened. You took all the kick out of the run. Then you asked for a cheer as if you hated to—and you moved your arms as if they were made of boiled spaghetti. You're pretty clever, you are, and if you're just a little cleverer, you'll ——”

“You'll resign,” interrupted Ross, still furious. “You'll get out and let somebody with some sense have your job.”

Jenkins touched his arm mollifyingly. “No, Sam, you're wrong. Bob can't do anything like that. It would cause a lot of talk and make matters worse. No; all he can do is forget his personal grievances and after this try to be a sport.”

Feeling as guilty as if he had disgraced the college, Nelson offered to apologize to Bill, but Jenkins vetoed the offer. “Don't say anything to anybody,” he ordered. “Sam and I won't say anything to Royce, either. The more that's said, the worse things will be. You just mind your p's

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and q's after this, that's all—and if you don't, I'll see to it that you'll wish you had."

Bill's anger stayed with him. Most of the students tried to make amends by greeting him with extra cordiality thereafter when they met him, but he ignored their overtures. He had always been reserved, but now he grew cold and distant, often brusque and impatient. He made it clear that he walked alone. To his mates on the team he was courteous but unbending, showing friendliness only to Harry Coombs, of whom he was sure. He liked Harry better than ever because the boy had had sense enough to say nothing about the insult, and during games he sometimes smiled grimly as he watched Harry give him every chance to star. If there was a long drop kick to be made, Harry saw that Bill had the chance to try, although the full-back was as gifted with his toe as Bill was. Five times out of six, if there was a chance to score, Bill was given the chance. Eventually the full-back and the other half-back protested to Harry.

"I know you've got a kick coming," Harry said agreeably, "but the boys gave Bill a rotten deal—and they're going to cheer their dirty lungs out for him this season or there's going to be another

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quarter-back on the team. If you don't like what I'm doing, tell Sam about it—and you can tell him what I said.”

They did tell Sam—and Sam didn't know what to say. The morale of the team was getting very bad. Dropping Bill was an impossible idea, and antagonizing Harry was equally impossible; he had no one to take their places. In the end he temporized and said he would talk to Harry. Harry listened politely and then replied that he had watched Bill Royce get a dirty deal from everybody for two years and that he was going to make it up to him if he could. Usually amiable and pliant, he was now stubborn and determined. When Sam objected that he wasn't thinking of the best interests of the team, he retorted that Bill was most of the team.

Sam went into executive session with Martin Jenkins.

“You're a good coach, Sam,” Jenkins said, “but a rotten diplomat. Go talk to Bill, of course.”

“Bill?” Dumbfounded, Sam stared at him.

“Of course. I don't understand him and I don't like him very well, but I will say he's got sense. You just put the problem squarely up to

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him, but, for God's sake, don't say anything about Bob Nelson's bull."

So Sam went dutifully to Bill. "The team's morale all shot to hell," he explained dolefully, "because Harry's giving you all the breaks. Tell him to lay off, won't you?"

"Why come to me?" Bill responded coldly. "I've never told Harry to let me carry the ball."

"Oh, I know that—but he's sore at something and he says the breaks are coming to you. I'll admit he's right, but the team's going to be shot all to pieces if something isn't done."

Bill smiled. He understood the situation perfectly. "Harry means well," he said, "but he's standing on his own foot. I don't want the breaks—and he's been working me nearly to death. I'll tell him to lay off."

He was as good as his word, and Ross, who had more sense than Jenkins gave him credit for, saw to it that the disgruntled players knew who was responsible for their new opportunities to serve their alma mater—and incidentally gather in a little glory for themselves. They grew very friendly to Bill. He smiled and failed to notice their friendliness. He smiled at the frenzied cheering, too, which greeted nearly every play

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he made—but he smiled bitterly. His bitterness killed much of the pleasure he had formerly got in playing. He did his best, but the glamour of the game was dimmed.

He grew noticeably older that term. Except for his usually grave demeanor, he had not been particularly more mature looking than the other students; indeed, he looked younger than many. His face was unlined, his color clear and healthy, his body straight and splendidly strong, his brown eyes bright, his step full of spring and vigor; in such strength as his there was more youth than in the many anemic boys of eighteen and twenty, yet at twenty-four he became obviously a person apart, a man among boys. Some of the younger instructors were often taken for undergraduates, and visitors were apt to take Bill for an instructor.

He didn't know that he was hurt; he thought he was disgusted. What did he care, he asked himself, about the stupid howling of a lot of kids who didn't have enough sense not to howl? They had cheered him with ear-splitting yells for two years, and the only emotion he had experienced was irritation because their noise made it hard sometimes to hear signals. Once they had cheered

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indifferently. What difference did that make? Since then they had cheered harder than ever. And what difference did *that* make? What was the whole damn collegiate poppycock to him? Just a little less than nothing—that's what it was, less than nothing. To hell with all of them. . . .

His attitude was quite clear in his mind and he made no effort to make it less clear to any one else. He sought no one, and he permitted only two students to seek him, Harry Coombs and Freddy Schiller. Loyal always, Harry sought him in the rare moments when he wasn't busy with his studies or with some activity, and Freddy clung to him with a gratitude and devotion which touched Bill far more deeply than he cared to admit.

He studied so hard that he grew thin. Once the football season was over, he neglected exercise for the first time in his life. He never took long walks any more unless Freddy went with him. Stubbornly he fought down his thoughts with work; he drank down learning as a drug. He didn't want to think about Raleigh College, and, above all, he didn't want to think about Patricia Roberts. He told Harry that he and Patricia had broken up and hoped that Harry's good taste

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would prevent embarrassing questions. Harry said he was sorry and then said no more. Bill talked to no one about either Patricia or the college, but night after night he studied until his eyes would stay open no longer. He was afraid to go to bed. Until he turned out the light, he could drive back his thoughts; but they thrived in the darkness, they bore down on him relentlessly, they tortured him with the reality which mocked the dream he had cherished.

That term he grew sterner looking, and his face seemed to lose its mobility; his jaw looked as if it had frozen in place.

CHAPTER XVI

IN that first term of his junior year Bill had one triumph, and at the end of it he had another. Both of them gave him deep satisfaction, but they did not compensate for his loneliness; they did not bring back Patricia and the dreams she had stood for, those dreams which he was trying so hard and so futilely to forget. When hundreds of girls poured into Raleigh for the fall dance, he had seen a tall, dark splendid creature walking toward him. His heart stopped; his knees turned to water; his lungs refused him air. A second later the girl passed unconcernedly by. He had never seen her before, but her resemblance to Patricia had been enough to leave him shaken for days. It was no longer worth while for him to pretend to himself that he no longer cared about her. He did care with every drop of emotional strength he possessed, and now that he had lost her, ambition itself was as meaningless as a forgotten dream, and success only a mirage.

His first triumph had come through Freddy

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Schiller. The glee club had asked Freddy to be the soloist at their fall concert, and to everybody's surprise he had quietly consented. Freddy had become the campus puzzle. When, early in the term, three well-meaning youths had gone to his room and attempted to seduce him into a drunken spree, he had said firmly that he wasn't going. They wanted music and remained insistent. A second time he declined. Then one of the boys grabbed his arm and clung to it tenaciously when Freddy tried to shake him off. The boy was unconscious two minutes—and Freddy hadn't been able to play the piano for a week. Thereafter there were no attempts to shanghai him, and when he had demonstrated his skill with a rapier and his speed as a swimmer, the college shook itself, wondered if it had been dreaming for three years, and decided that Freddy Schiller was neither so pathetic nor so amusing as it had thought. Every one became very respectful and very friendly, and Freddy grew strong in the sunshine of his popularity.

Then the night of the concert came—and his strength vanished as if it had never been. He was terrified, limp with stage fright. He had gone to the hall eager and happy; then from the

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wings he saw the audience and an ague of terror possessed him. He couldn't face those people; he couldn't. The concert began. He stood in the wings and listened to the glee club, trying vainly to get his courage back. In ten minutes he would have to walk on that stage, and he couldn't—he *couldn't*! With a wan hope of inspiring himself, he hurried out of the back door and opened his mouth to sing the opening bars of his first number. Not a sound came. He tried again. His throat was closed as tight as if it were triple bound in bands of brass. Shaking from head to foot, he stood there. The night was frosty, but his face felt like flame. Applause came weakly to him though the walls, then silence, then the glee club singing "The Bells of St. Mary's." Two more songs and then— He would have run if he could have, but his legs were too weak; he could not move. "Oh, the bells of St. Mary's; I hear they are calling ——" The rhythm beat in his brain. Why had he promised? Why, why? He'd make a fool of himself. Bill would be ashamed of him. *Bill!* The name clanged in his mind like a bell ringing with encouragement and hope. *Bill!*

He leaped forward, raced around the building

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to the front entrance, up the steps, and into the foyer. A student usher was standing by the door. Breathlessly, Freddy spoke to him.

"Do you know where Bill Royce is sitting?"

"Yeah—sure, down front to the left."

"Get him for me—quick!"

"What?" The usher hesitated, confused by Freddy's urgency. Freddy shoved him forward and pleaded, "Oh, hurry! Tell him to come out here. Please hurry."

"You bet!" and the usher disappeared through the swinging doors into the dark auditorium. A minute later Bill appeared, looking surprised and curious.

"What's the matter, Freddy?" he asked kindly, noting the boy's white face and twitching hands.

Freddy clutched his sleeve and drew him outside the building and down the steps.

"I can't sing, Bill," he whispered, his voice shaking with terror. "I can't, Bill. I can't."

Bill saw that Freddy was on the verge of tears, probably of hysterics. Something had to be done quickly—and he didn't know what to do. Sympathy was dangerous; so was everything else. He resorted to football tactics because they had worked before.

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"You can't!" he cried contemptuously, grabbing Freddy's shoulder and gripping it until the boy winced with pain. "You can't? Like hell you can't. You're going to if I have to drag you on the stage and stand there with you."

"I can't," Freddy whimpered, writhing to free himself from Bill's merciless fingers.

The fingers dug deeper. "You can! God, what a damn fool you are, Freddy! You're a filthy little coward; that's what you are. What are you going to do—throw me down?"

"Throw you down, Bill?" Freddy stared blankly at Bill and repeated the words weakly.

"Yes; throw me down! How do you think I'm going to feel if you walk out on me now?"

He felt Freddy's limp body tighten under his hand. "I guess you haven't any guts after all, Freddy," he added, quietly scornful.

"Let go!" Bill's hand gripped with cruel tenacity. "Let go, I say!" Tense as a fighter, Freddy tore himself free and disappeared around the side of the building almost before Bill knew he was gone.

The glee club was finishing the last song of its first group as Bill felt his way carefully down the dark aisle to his seat. He was sick with disappoint-

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ment. God alone knew where Freddy was by this time—probably half a mile out in the country. For a moment his sympathy and disappointment died in a rush of contempt. The little quitter! There was noisy applause, and he glanced up. The glee club was leaving the stage. The little quitter—oh, the poor kid! What a shame, what a dirty, dirty shame. . . . Just when he was coming along so well, too. . . . “I might have known it,” Bill thought miserably. “Everything I touch goes rotten.”

Another burst of applause. Mechanically he glanced at the stage, and then stiffened in his chair as if he had been slapped. There stood Freddy, white as his shirt front but straight as a rod. Bill was trembling. He gripped his hands together so hard that they were stiff afterward—and he forgot to breathe. The accompanist played a few bars. Silently the audience waited. Freddy’s head lifted slightly—and for a reason he could never understand, Bill noticed how brightly his yellow curls shone in the hard light. There was a pause, Freddy’s lips opened—and Bill shivered from head to foot as the beautiful voice sounded in his ears. For the first half dozen measures the tones were tight, a little husky, and

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then as if a dam had broken in Freddy's throat, he poured forth the golden glory of his song.

That concert was always a haze in Bill's mind. He had confused memories of thunderous applause, of encore after encore, of Freddy bowing and smiling, of college boys shouting like emotional Latins—and Freddy, Freddy singing and singing while he sat there in the dark hall and said over and over again, "Thank God, thank God!"

He had been very tired when he went back to his room, more tired than he had ever been after a football game. The stairs had been endless upward flights, and when he reached his room he threw himself down in the morris chair. He ought to have been happy, but he wasn't; he was just so tired from the strain he had been unconsciously enduring that every muscle ached.

He filled his pipe, lighted it, and puffed meditatively. Gradually the weariness slipped away and a deep contentment took its place. Well, Freddy had put it over. . . . A game little soldier; that's what he was—he'd had the nerve to do the impossible. A game kid—a damned game kid. . . .

There was a rattle of the door knob, the door

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flew open, Freddy flashed into the room, the door slammed, and ——

“Bill!” Freddy cried, his voice shaking with happiness. “Bill!”

With one quick movement Bill was on his feet and gripping Freddy’s hand. “Great stuff, Freddy,” he said proudly, “great stuff.”

Freddy stood there looking very young in his dinner jacket, very clean and fair and fine. He held Bill’s hand tightly, and his blue eyes dimmed with tears. His head sank, and he looked up shyly, a little smile twitching his lips.

“Would you mind,” he whispered huskily, “if I bawled?”

“I’ll break your head if you do,” Bill roared, terrified for fear Freddy was going to cry. You couldn’t tell what artistic fellows might do. “I’ll beat hell out of you. If you get emotional ——”

Freddy grinned. “All right, I won’t if you feel that way about it, but, believe me, I want to.” The smile faded from his face again and his head sank. “I want to tell you, though ——”

Bill was as frightened as Freddy had been earlier in the evening, and he had just as strong an impulse to run. Freddy was going to thank him, and he was afraid. He could not stand to be

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thanked. Color stained his face from his collar to his forehead, and he muttered angrily, "Shut up. I'm pleased as the devil. Let it go at that."

After a little more argument, Freddy let it go, but in the argument he got over to Bill the depth of his gratitude, and embarrassed as both of them were, Bill knew that some of his own embarrassment came from a dread not only of Freddy's emotion but of his own. He was very proud, and in the days following when the campus bowed humbly before Freddy, his pride grew. Nobody but Freddy knew what part Bill had played in his sensational triumph, but Freddy knew and gave Bill all the credit he could wish for and more. Freddy's triumph in itself was enough; his gratitude made it Bill's triumph, too.

Bill's second triumph was effected entirely by himself. He had registered in an extra course that term. With the utmost deliberation, he cut classes, failed tests, and magnificently failed the final examination. In one other course he carefully submitted work which would not bring him more than a grade of C, and in a third course he aimed for a D and got it. He was far more pleased with his low grades than he had ever been with his many A's; Phi Beta Kappa was definitely

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averted. He would not have to be a hypocrite and accept the key, nor a snob and decline it.

Three days after the second term began he received a summons from the dean and dutifully called on that arbiter of undergraduate destinies.

The dean was a short, pudgy man with a round, cherubic face, plump hands, horn-rimmed spectacles, a snub nose, bristly gray mustache, scraggly gray hair, short, plump legs, and stubby hands that dimpled at the knuckles. Bill considered him a physical mistake, and he wasn't inclined to pay much more reverence to the dean's mind than he did to his body.

At the dean's invitation, Bill seated himself across the desk from him and waited politely.

"I wanted to speak to you, Mr. Royce," the dean began, "about your grades last term. They were so inferior to any you have had before that I thought something must be wrong."

"Wrong?" Bill managed to look confused. "Why, no sir; nothing's wrong."

"But why the slump in your work?" The dean was trying to be very pleasant. He had great respect for athletes and did not wish to antagonize Bill, but he had not forgotten their conversation

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two years before—and he did not remember it with any pleasure.

Bill crossed his long legs and relaxed comfortably in his chair. He had an idea he was going to enjoy this talk.

“Why, I don’t know, sir,” he replied casually. “It’s nothing to worry about, is it?”

The dean adjusted his spectacles and frowned officially.

“Your grades show a great falling off in your work, and a slump in an A man is always worth worrying about. You haven’t been ill, have you?”

“Oh, no. I’ve been in excellent health.”

“Was the extra course too great a burden?”

Bill smiled. “I’m afraid I never let it trouble me that much.”

“Well, why didn’t you drop it then?” The dean felt baffled, and irritation was honing an edge to his voice. He tried hard to be fatherly as he explained, “You didn’t need it.”

“Oh, I didn’t care to bother about it.” Bill was airily indifferent, and the dean’s fat jowls began to redden. “It didn’t make any difference one way or the other.”

“It has spoiled your admirable record,” the

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dean said severely. "It has even spoiled your chances for Phi Beta Kappa."

With a lithe motion Bill uncrossed his legs and leaned his arms on the desk. His brown eyes were smiling with amusement. It was only with an effort that he kept himself from saying, "Yes, and you're scared to death I'll get careless and be ineligible for football. Don't worry, old man. You know as well as I do I'm paid, and you ought to know I wouldn't take any chances with such a good job."

Instead he said, "I'm not interested in either Phi Bete or grades. I'm here for an education, and so long as I feel I'm getting that, I don't care at all about the records. Grades don't mean anything to me."

The dean wasn't a subtle man, but he knew that he was being made sport of by an undergraduate, and his geniality was sagging under the strain. "You have a strange attitude, Mr. Royce," he remarked acidly, making it clear by his manner that the attitude was not only strange but objectionable.

"I'm twenty-four, sir, and I can't keep the point of view of a child forever." The insult snapped the dean's patience, and he glared openly

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as Bill explained pleasantly, "Children work for grades. Maybe that's the way one should work, but I can't. I really don't see why you're worrying. My average is safely within the limit. Surely you don't interview every man who gets one E in three years." Bill's manner and tone were perfectly respectful, but the dean knew that his face had been slapped with a challenge.

"Of course I don't," he snapped back irritably, "but that's no reason you should resent my interest in you."

"Oh, I don't resent it, sir," Bill assured him blandly. "I was merely curious. You see, I've been wondering why everything I do here is of such interest to everybody. I can't even flunk one course without having it receive official attention. Anybody else could. I'm just modest enough to wonder why both the students and the administration take such unusual interest in me. I ought to be flattered, I suppose, but I'm not. Ever since I've been here I've tried to be let alone, but I've failed." Unfortunately, his keen pleasure in baiting the dean brought a twinkle to his eyes that marred the pathetic quality of his voice.

The dean rose, his eyes sparkling angrily behind his glasses, his face red.

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"You are insolent, Mr. Royce," he said, his anger bursting forth suddenly, "very insolent."

"If I was, I'm sorry, sir," Bill apologized, rising also. "I didn't intend to be."

"I hope not." The dean swelled like a pouter pigeon, acquiring dignity and diameter simultaneously. "At any rate, you will not be troubled by any interest in the future from this office—that is, of course, unless you fail more courses; then you can expect to hear from me officially."

"Of course, sir," Bill agreed, poised and pleasant to the last, "but I don't think there is any need for me to flunk any more courses."

"Figure that one out for yourself," he thought as he said, "Good morning," and bowed himself out of the office. Thoroughly pleased with the interview, he returned to his room, lighted his pipe, stretched out on his couch, and thought of several other remarks he might have made and wished longingly that he had.

"I wonder," he mused, "if they think even God is interested in football players."

CHAPTER XVII

BILL settled comfortably to work. The weather was vile, snowstorm following snowstorm, each followed by a thaw which turned the campus into a lake of dirty slush—and each thaw in turn followed by a week or ten days of bitterly cold weather. The students kept to their rooms, sallying forth occasionally with snowshoes or skis or skates, but spending most of their time studying, playing cards or shooting craps, “bulling” before log fires, or yawning miserably and wishing they were somewhere else.

Bill's little room did not boast a fireplace, but Freddy's did, and Freddy drew him to his room as often as he could. Sometimes Harry Coombs found time from his multitude of activities to dash in for half an hour, but, to Bill's surprise, he and Freddy did not hit it off very well. Harry had the deepest respect for Freddy, and Freddy had plenty for Harry, but their mutual respect somehow did not form a basis for friendship. Their interests were too far apart. Freddy was

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a citizen of the world, a cosmopolite with a thousand interests outside of the college; Harry was a "Raleigh man." They both adored Bill. Otherwise they had little in common.

Freddy's fireplace and piano and his singing made Bill's second term in his junior year much the pleasantest he had spent at Raleigh. The more musical and the more intelligent boys sought Freddy eagerly, and there were often several of them in his room when Bill was there. As a rule he said little; he merely sat and listened to their talk or music. He did not make friends with those boys, but he learned to tolerate them—and the word went around the campus that big Bill Royce had gone esthetic. Every one grinned with masculine superiority. An esthetic pianist was neither very paradoxical nor very offensive—but an esthetic half-back! *There* was a paradox for you. No one would have been surprised if Bill had indulged in a permanent wave and gone to classes holding a calla lily in his hand.

Bill knew nothing about the catty gossip—and it is extraordinary how catty college boys can be—nor would he have cared anything about it if he had. He had reached the place where nothing could distress him at Raleigh but its approval.

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That place wasn't Nirvana, but at least it was a solid platform on which he could stand. His difference had been stressed for nearly three years; greater difference was now his only aspiration.

If it hadn't been for Constance Milburn and Professor Graham, the term would have been fairly placid, but Tommy Graham, as the students called him, made the term a joy, and Connie made the last month of it many things but none of them were placid. She was the sort of girl who sometimes left a man ecstatic and sometimes left him ready for suicide, but she never left one calm.

Bill had had a few interesting instructors at Raleigh, many dull ones, some who were competent and several who were not, but Tommy Graham was both a scholar and a teacher, a combination so rare that Bill could only genuflect in humble admiration when he met him. When he entered college he had expected to find many Tommy Grahams; by the time he was a junior he was awed to find one.

Technically, Thomas McKee Graham was a professor of history, but since the majority of his colleagues were rather narrow specialists, most of

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them either felt that he had strayed into the wrong department or that he ought to join all the departments. Some of the Raleigh historians believed in the social interpretation of history, some of them in the political, some in the economic, and one in the military, but Graham declared that men and movements and attitudes were only actors in one great drama. He insisted that Jean Jacques Rousseau was more important than Napoleon and shocked his military colleague, that the cotton gin was more important than Metternich and shocked his political colleague, and shocked them all by insisting that Aristotle's "Poetics" was more important than Alexander's conquests and quite as important as Karl Marx's "Das Kapital." History, he said over and over again, was drama, and that if Wellington saved England once, Shakespeare saved it a thousand times. He was full of such heresies, and if he talked more about Darwin and Huxley and Spencer than he did about Gladstone and Palmerston, it was because he knew enough about the two statesmen to put them where they belonged. His colleagues yearned to seek the comfort all jealous professors seek when overshadowed by another member of their department; they wanted to call

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him a "mere popularizer," but his scholarship was so firmly established that they were forced to consider him eccentric rather than ignorant. To their great distress, the students considered him magnificent; indeed, they went so far as to say that he was a wow—and greater praise than that hath no student.

Bill found Graham's course in modern history a wonder and a joy, and when Graham singled him out for personal attention from the two hundred students around him, he was so proud and happy that he did not think of Patricia for two days.

Graham won Bill's admiration with the opening words of his first lecture.

"We are studying," Graham said, "the latest act in the drama of man. To get the devastating power of that act, you must know a great deal about the preceding acts. Since this college is American and therefore efficient, it hands out knowledge exactly as the dealer passes out hands in Five Hundred. It is my privilege to reveal the widow. If you have a hand, the widow will be glorious; if you haven't, it will be just three cards. Not one in ten of you holds more than five cards, but the college forces me to suppose

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you hold full hands. Very well; we shall proceed on that false assumption.

"I shall be interested in playing the hand—and I shall judge you by your understanding of the plays. Learn your dates and you may get a D. Understand the drama and you may get an A. Dates, I hope you will understand, are merely the punctuation marks of history. They are necessary, but alone they mean nothing—just as a comma or semicolon in itself means nothing. Please remember that. And remember, too, that wars are only bloody climaxes to scenes which are so absurd, rationally considered, that they seem almost obscenely comic. The Great War was so useless that it was tragic, and in many of the events leading up to it, it had all the aspects of a well-planned joke. I shall endeavor to make you see the point."

An earnest student sitting next to Bill said that Graham was just a popularizer wise-cracking to attract attention. "He likes to turn things upside down," he said, "just to sound smart."

"Do you think so?" Bill asked dubiously. "He sounds to me as if he were talking sense."

In the first-hour examination, Graham asked a question about Bismarck. Bill ended his answer

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with a sentence which caught Graham's attention. He wrote: "Bismarck was a great diplomat and therefore evil." When the examination was returned, he found a note penciled on the cover of his blue book: "Call at my office, please, and bring this test with you."

Wondering, Bill obeyed orders. Graham smiled crookedly at him, offered him a cigarette, lighted one himself, and examined the test paper. "Oh, yes, I remember," he exclaimed. "Sit down, Mr. Royce—please. I want to have a talk with you."

Graham was small, thin, and nervous. He wore spectacles with thick lenses and gold bows, and behind the lenses small brown eyes snapped and smiled. His colorless face was creased with wrinkles; his long, thin nose was bent at the tip; his mouth was big and his teeth were dark and uneven; his hair was sparse and untidy. Physically, he was everything Bill deplored, but every inch of his little frame was alive, and fifty years of living and hard study had not dimmed his vitality.

"What do you mean?" he asked, "by saying that Bismarck was evil because he was a great

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diplomat? Most of the boys said he was a great man for exactly the same reason."

"Why, it seems to me, sir," Bill said, "that all great diplomats are rogues—Tallyrand and Disraeli and Metternich, and—well, all of them. They'd be bunglers if they weren't. You can't have any moral sense and be a diplomat."

Graham thought Bill's assertion highly debatable, but he decided to leave the debate for another time. He leaned back in his swivel chair and twinkled at Bill through his glasses. "I've heard of you, Royce," he said chuckling, "and of your extraordinary conduct. I've even heard some ver-y important people speak of you with deep concern." He drawled the "very important people" humorously, and Bill knew he was speaking of the president and the dean. "I've wondered," he went on, "if you were intelligent or just stubborn. Being different is worth while if there is a sound philosophical reason behind your difference; it's stupid if you just have your back up. I thought your remark about Bismarck was significant. I see that it was. You apparently don't admire diplomacy in general even when it is backed up with a mailed fist."

Bill smiled and relaxed comfortably in his

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chair. This at last was a man he could talk to. "No, sir," he replied, "I'm afraid I don't—and I could kick myself for admiring Bismarck."

"Good!" Graham cried, ruffling his hair. "Good! You're not fooled by yourself. Most of us are, you know. Well, Royce, I'm frankly curious about you. I'm a curious old bird, anyhow. I'm always nosing around where I haven't any business to be. I like football and I've seen you play—and, as I said before, I've heard people in high places speak about you with deep concern. You've been thumbing your nose at Raleigh College for nearly three years. Now that I'm pretty sure you're intelligent, I'd like to know why. I hope you don't think I'm intrusive."

"Oh, no!" Bill protested quickly. "Not at all, sir. I'll be glad to tell you. It's just that I'm here for an education, and the whole college seems to be in a conspiracy to keep me from it. I like to study, and study seems to be bad form—and so I'm all wet, if you know what that means."

"Perfectly. It's a college neologism which has hung on so long that even I understand it. But why do you refuse scholarships and such aids?"

"How did you hear about that?" Bill asked,

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surprised. Surely, he must be more notorious than he had thought.

"I'm a member of the scholarship committee. Your name has been brought up regularly at meetings, but the dean has always assured us that you would refuse aid."

"I would. I can make my way alone."

"But couldn't you use the money?"

"Oh, of course, but I don't want it."

"Why not?—if the question isn't too personal."

Professor Graham's air was not at all official, and so Bill answered without evasion. "I don't mind explaining, sir. When I was a freshman, Dr. Stanton told me I wasn't a representative Raleigh man. He also gave me to understand that scholarships weren't meant for queer animals like me. Well, I'd rather be queer than representative—if representative means paddling freshmen, wearing a lot of jewelry, and going crazy over activities."

"Got your back up, didn't you?"

Graham's question slipped out softly and slyly, but it made Bill flush. "Maybe I did," he retorted, "but I don't think it's going to come down. Maybe I'm stubborn, but I'd rather be myself than pretend for the sake of a scholarship."

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Money isn't worrying me, anyhow—and I'd rather not be beholden to the college under the circumstances."

"I don't know enough about you or about the circumstances to know whether you're rather admirably proud or rather unadmirably stubborn, but I have an idea you're partly right and partly stubborn. Well, never mind that now. You think independently and that's what I wanted to find out about." Again Graham's eyes twinkled and his lips spread in a broad smile. "You're such a big, husky animal that you haven't any right to brains. You seem to have some, though. I hope you have a little humor, too—and an appetite; at any rate, Mrs. Graham is an excellent cook and she said I might invite you to dinner if I wanted to—and I do want to. How about Friday evening at seven?"

Bill was so surprised that he stared rudely for a full minute; then he flushed and blurted out with a freshman's candor: "Oh, I'd like to. I—I didn't think that's what you wanted."

"I didn't until I was sure your test wasn't an accident. I like to know my students, Royce, and occasionally an A student is worth knowing—not often, I'll admit, but occasionally. Most of the

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boys I like get C's. Maybe we won't like each other later, but"—he smiled boyishly—"let's take a chance for one evening, anyway."

Bill hadn't been so thrilled since he was elected captain of his high school football team. He had received his accolade; for nearly three years he had knelt, a squire—now he was rising, a knight. He didn't feel that he had really received his golden spurs, but at least his shoulder had been touched by his king. The spurs would come. True knighthood was just ahead.

The dinner was a royal feast to him, although Mrs. Graham cooked it and a student served it. Mrs. Graham was plump and rosy, a calm woman who accepted her distinguished husband so casually that Bill was shocked. He was a trial and a tribulation, she told Bill, the sort of husband who either turned his wife into a philosopher or a mad woman. Spots appeared on his clothes by magic, it seemed; he dropped books around the house as a cat left hairs; he scattered ashes on the tablecloth and put his feet on his desk; he couldn't, or wouldn't, remember to brush his hair, mail letters, leave his rubbers on the stoop, or keep engagements with people he didn't like; he was, in short, a very drab professor who acted like

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a prima donna. She was serene in her gentle jibbing, and Graham grinned like a pleased but guilty schoolboy. They had no children, and her attitude toward Tommy, as she called Professor Graham when she spoke to or of him, was so maternal that it would have been amusing if it hadn't been utterly charming.

Bill loved the atmosphere of their simple, pretty home; he liked their total lack of swank; and, most of all, he liked Graham's friendly acceptance of him. For the first time since his arrival at Raleigh, he felt that he was being met on a level. The students either looked up to him or down on him; Tommy Graham looked him square in the eye.

A second invitation gave Bill deep satisfaction; he knew that he must have met the test the first invitation offered. The third time he was asked he felt at home, and thereafter he felt free to call on his own initiative. He knew that both Graham and Mrs. Graham liked him, and if Graham was rather openly studying and appraising him, he did not care. Graham's interest, regardless of what turn it took, was a high compliment. He would not have exchanged it for all

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the fraternities, honor societies, class offices, and scholarships at Raleigh College.

One day in May he dropped into Graham's office for a casual chat.

Graham said, "Hello, Bill; excuse me a minute," slapped at the ashes on his vest, motioned toward a chair, and then scribbled rapidly on a sheet of paper on his desk. Suddenly he slapped a blotter on the paper, looked up, and grinned at Bill.

"That," said he, proudly, "gives me untold satisfaction. It's one on Mrs. Graham. She said I'd forget to write that letter—and I haven't. I only hope I don't forget to rub it in." He folded the letter and asked, whimsically, "Don't you think Jane is a good woman, Bill?"

Bill paused in the process of lighting a cigarette to murmur, "Well, I don't know. Mrs. Graham *seems* good." He felt very flippant and very proud of his flippancy. To be jesting on equal terms with Tommy Graham was the equivalent in his mind to have received a social and intellectual *magna cum laude*.

Graham slipped the letter into an envelope, scratched the address down hastily, licked the flap and sealed it, then said: "I'm sure she's a good

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woman, but she's a trial; she's always right. This time, though, she's wrong. I wrote the letter. I *do* hope I don't forget to tell her. Yes, and I'll rub it into Connie, too—the impudent little devil.”

“Connie?” Bill was warm with pleasure. Nothing set him up so much as this feeling of camaraderie with Graham. His privilege of tossing off a personal question gave him a sense of friendship, of having been admitted to the inner sanctum.

Graham shot forward in his chair, then slid back so rapidly that the springs squealed in protest. “Oh, I forgot!” he cried. He slapped first his forehead, then the desk. “Lord, it's lucky you dropped in today. I've been forgetting for three days. Why, Connie, Bill, is Jane's niece, and how Jane's brother ever bred anything like her is a conundrum for the gods. She's been with us ten days, and she says she's going to stay until vacation. I don't know what she's come for. I asked her, and she pouted and said she loved me. If she weren't so outlandishly pretty, I'd think she'd come up here shopping for a husband, but she has so many boys around, she must have come

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to get away from them. I heard she nearly caused a riot in front of the commons yesterday."

"I've heard of her," Bill exclaimed, leaning back and laughing. "Harry Coombs told me. It seems she drove her car up in front of the commons just at noon. She had a flat tire and stood up in the car and screamed for help. About fifty fellows came rushing down the steps, and they all but beat each other up arguing about who was going to change the tire. While they were arguing, some fellow did the work, and all the time she sat in the car and smoked a cigarette. I heard she kissed the fellow who changed the tire."

Graham smiled and shook his head. "The Iliad probably grew from just such a beginning. She *threw* a kiss. That's what she said, and that's true, because if she had kissed him she would have been the first to tell about it. Well, she wants to meet you."

"Me?"

"Yes—you. She not only wants to meet you; she insists on it. When she heard Jane and me talking about you, she was in a dreadful flutter. She saw you play against Sanford last fall—and she says you're cute." Graham added with scholarly horror, "Cute? God help me!"

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"God help *me!*" said Bill. "No, Professor Graham, I can't do it. I'm afraid of women."

Graham's smile faded and he looked keenly at Bill.

"Honestly?" he asked.

"Honestly. They play the devil with me." A shadow passed across his face and Graham saw it. Bill had told him a great deal, but Graham guessed that the most important details had been omitted. The shadow undoubtedly stood for one of those details.

"Are you as susceptible as all that?" he asked. "I don't know just why, but I should have expected you to take girls rather casually. You're very hard in some ways, you know, and somehow I can't imagine your being sentimental about flappers like Connie."

"You'd expect me to love 'em and leave 'em?"

"Exactly."

"I have," said Bill frankly, "but I don't always forget 'em. Count me out as far as your niece is concerned. I don't want to take a chance; I'm busy."

"But you've got to take a chance," Graham protested, and Bill was surprised to see that he was really serious. "I won't have a moment's

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peace until you do. Come and be insulting or cold or whatever you will, but come, anyway. That child's mad. She's never been denied anything in her life, and she isn't going to be denied meeting you. Her father's made a great deal of money with bonds or stocks or something and Connie is their only child. She wears twenty-five-dollar shoes and Paris frocks. Please notice I said frocks. Dresses that cost as much as hers do are frocks. And that's about all she wears except stockings, and they look like unusually delicate spider webs. And she talks an argot which may be intelligible to you; it isn't to me. She was finished, you see, at a very exclusive school. Oh, my God, *finished!*"

Bill protested further, but Graham was so insistent that he finally gave in, as he knew he would when he first declined. He could deny Graham nothing—and he wanted to meet the girl. Maybe she would make him forget Patricia. If she brought him new pain, well and good; anything was preferable to the old.

Two nights later he dutifully appeared at the Graham's and politely acknowledged the introduction to Constance Milburn.

She was as demure as a child—and looked like

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one. Her hair was chestnut brown with streaks of gold in it when the light struck it just right. It was as short as his own in back and not much longer in front. There was just enough to make a carefully careless lock on her forehead and a little more to conceal partly the shameful nakedness of her ears. Her eyebrows were neatly plucked into two delicate, arched lines; her lips were rouged into the luscious redness of ripe cherries; her pink cheeks were softly powdered; and her sapphire blue eyes were shaded by dark lashes quite long enough to snare a susceptible man and more than curly enough to hold him. Her silk dress was neckless and armless, and if there hadn't been a touch of silver at the shoulder, she would have looked like a child in an apple green pinafore. Her slippers were silver, too, and her stockings—well, Bill had to look several times to be sure there were stockings, and then he looked again because it had been a long, long time since he had seen such pretty legs and ankles. She was, he decided, a knock-out and “probably dumb as hell.”

Connie was so small that he felt immense, something bloated and swollen. He became unhappily conscious of his hands and feet, and he

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could almost literally feel his shoulders stretching.

"I'll bet she pets," he thought, and then experienced two emotions simultaneously: one, shame because he had thought such a thing of Tommy Graham's niece, and, two, a mighty desire to prove his guess.

He was uncomfortable during dinner, and Connie's demureness added nothing to his comfort. He did not believe in her shy reticence, and he saw Graham watching her with blank astonishment. That girls were sometimes shy with football heroes he knew from experience, but Connie's silence was too prolonged and too complete to be real.

After dinner she asked if he wouldn't take her riding in her car. "Uncle Tommy has to work," she explained softly, "and I promised to get you out of the way."

Graham opened his mouth to deny that she had promised anything of the sort, but shut it and nodded his head in abject obedience when she turned to him and asked guilelessly, "Didn't I, Uncle Tommy?"

Bill managed to assure her that he would be delighted to go riding and to say his good nights.

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As he shook hands with Graham, the older man whispered, "I'm sorry, my boy."

Bill grinned at him and said good night to Mrs. Graham. He held a fur coat for Connie as she slipped into it and then followed her to the garage.

For a time they rode in silence, Bill driving the car at her request. He swung into a road which traveled for miles on the right bank of the river. The moon was silver on the waters, the feathery new leaves whispered softly in the night breeze, and somewhere near by a whippoorwill called—and Bill forgot the girl at his side; he was thinking of Patricia. A wistful little question shattered his reverie.

"What?" he asked. "What did you say?"

"I asked if you were one of those big, strong silent men?" Connie's voice was small and unhappy; it sounded bruised.

Bill laughed and glanced down at her. The top of the roadster had been lowered, and he could see her clearly in the bright light of a half moon. She was sitting on one foot and holding her fur coat close to her throat with both hands.

"I'm big all right," he acknowledged, "and I'm

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pretty strong—but I'm not very silent. I was just thinking; that's all."

"About what?" The question was so childishly eager that it gave its own answer. Amused and deliberately perverse, Bill gave the wrong one.

"Oh, about this and that. Isn't the moonlight pretty on the water?"

Connie slumped into a round fur bundle and five minutes elapsed before she spoke again. She seemed crushed by Bill's lack of gallantry.

When she spoke, her voice was only a treble thread spun into a fine question:

"Don't you ever drive with one hand?"

Bill startled the night with a shout. An animal darted across the road, a streak of black and white in the glare of the headlights. The animal, Bill thought even while laughing, was like Connie—pretty and cuddly to look at—but dangerous, oh, awfully dangerous.

"Yes," he replied, "I can drive with one hand; I can even drive with my knees, but I think I'd better drive with both hands tonight. It's such a pretty night, you see, and you're pretty, and there's moonlight, and it's spring. I think I'd better drive with both hands." He grinned down at her and asked laughingly, "Don't you?"

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Connie did not reply. Instead she found a cigarette case in a pocket, extracted a cigarette, lighted it from a mechanical lighter, and then returned the smoking paraphernalia to their wonted place. For a minute she puffed thoughtfully at the cigarette; then again she turned to Bill and asked:

"Have a drink of gin? I've got some."

"No, thanks—not tonight."

Again there was silence. Suddenly Connie swung around toward Bill and exclaimed, her voice shrill with astonishment, "Why, you must be *moral!*"

Bill could not help laughing, although he knew his amusement offended Connie.

"No," he admitted, chuckling, "I'm not very moral except when I'm with little girls who ought to be."

"I'm nineteen." This very proudly. "I'm nineteen—and I—well, I know a thing or two. Please stop the car."

If Bill had seen the glint in her blue eyes, he might have driven a little faster instead of stopping, but all he could see was the smooth top of her small head; so he obediently drew to the side of the road and pulled the hand-brake tight. The

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next instant he was smothered with fur and startled with a kiss which made his lips tingle and his knees a trifle weak. Before he could protest or respond, Connie was on her feet tugging at his shoulder.

"Come over here," she commanded, "over on my side; the wheel's in the way."

Trying very hard to remember that this amorous little wildcat was Professor Graham's niece and therefore sacred, Bill sat firmly where he was. A second later, however, he moved. His scalp had always been as tender as a raw nerve—and Connie had a merciless grip on a fistful of his thick brown hair.

Before he had freed her hand, she was on his lap, her arms were around his neck, and her lips were pressed against his. The kiss was long and expert; Bill and his conscience were in full battle by the time it was over.

"There now!" said Connie, indignantly, settling on his lap with a thump. "Treat *me* like a child, will you?"

"Yes," Bill replied, trying to rouse himself to a protecting state of anger. "I'll treat you like a bad child in a minute and spank you. I didn't come out here to pet."

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"Well, I did."

"Well, I didn't!" Bill wished she would get off his lap or that there was some place other than the wheel to put her. He was a healthy male—and he had no particular desire to fight temptation.

"Oh, aren't you pure!" Connie cried scornfully. "You're a flat tire—that's what you are." She bounced impatiently on his knees and scolded like a chattering monkey. "You don't talk and you don't drink and you don't pet—what do you do, anyway—say prayers or something? You're a washout. I wish I'd never known you." And to Bill's surprise and horror her lovely little head fell to his shoulder and her body shook with sobs. "I hate you," she wailed. "I just *loathe* you!"

"There, there," Bill said soothingly, holding her a little more firmly and feeling very silly. "You're just getting sore over nothing. Come up; buck up—and let's go home."

Her hand crept gently over his cheek and sent chills chasing each other through him. The hand touched his forehead and traveled slowly upward.

"What fine hair you have," she whispered, running her fingers through it and smoothing it; "it's

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like silk. I've been wanting to play with it all evening."

Bill felt as if he were being drugged, as if some infinitely sweet perfume were drowning his senses and making him weak. Everything seemed to be slipping away from him except an overpowering consciousness of the girl in his arms. With an effort which seemed to take all his strength, he jerked his head from her hands and pulled her arms down.

"Sit up," he ordered sternly. "I want to talk to you."

She shook her head violently. "No! I like it here."

"Sit up!" She struggled, but Bill forced her to her feet. Then, holding her there, he slipped back under the wheel before he released her. "Now sit down," he said fiercely, "and stay there."

For a moment she stood still, clinging to the windshield for support; then she slumped sullenly to the seat.

"All right, grandpa," she said mockingly; "go ahead. A woman's place is in the home, isn't it?" Before Bill could make an indignant reply, she

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giggled and added triumphantly, "Just the same, you like it."

Bill lighted a cigarette nervously and drew several puffs of smoke into his lungs before he attempted speech. The smoke helped, but he needed something stronger; a good long drink of her gin would not have been enough. For a brief moment he wished ardently that this girl weren't Graham's niece; he'd teach her to . . . and then he killed the thought. She *was* Graham's niece! What a wild, provocative little devil she was—like a cuddly, immoral kitten. . . . He inhaled more smoke and stared at the silver river. She was—

"Well?" Connie interrupted his thoughts. "Aren't you going to save my soul?"

"I haven't any interest in your soul," Bill retorted, shaken and angry. "I doubt if you have one. I was just wondering what Professor Graham would think of you." He lied; he was wondering while he spoke what Professor Graham would think of *him*.

"Uncle Tommy?" Connie paused to light another of her cigarettes and then added placidly, "Oh, Uncle Tommy's a darling. I think he's the

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cutest relative I have, but he's Mid-Victorian, just Mid-Victorian—ab-so-*lute*-ly!"

"He told me you were mad," said Bill, frankly caustic, "and I guess he's right. Do you try to pet with every fellow you meet?"

"Don't be nasty, Bill." She was utterly serene. "Every fellow hasn't sex appeal. You've got just lots of it, though." She smoothed down the fur on her knee, blew a cloud of smoke into the cool night air, and observed proudly, "So have I."

"Not for me," lied Bill insultingly. "You haven't even a little bit for me—so lay off. Don't you know what reticence means?"

"Yes—and I don't like it. I know lots more than Uncle Tommy thinks I do. I bet I know more about some things than he does. I suppose he told you I'm dumb. Well, I'm not. I even know what inhibitions are—and I don't like those, either. I think they're just Mid-Victorian." She paraded her erudition with such an air that she would have been amusing if she hadn't been sitting so close to Bill. Her manner was impersonal, but her careful physical contact with him wasn't.

He drew away from her and asked with open contempt, "Did you come up here because the boys down your way had lost their sex appeal?"

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His cheek stung. The slap had been quick and hard—and for the first time he respected her.

"I'm sorry," he muttered. "I shouldn't have said that—but you laid yourself open to it."

With a start of surprise he saw that she was crying. Her face was in her hands and her body was shaking.

"I was just so damned bored," she sobbed, "and—and I thought you were nice. You're so big—and—and brutal looking—and—oh, goddamn you!"

Bill patted her shoulder, leaned forward to switch on the ignition, and touched the starter with his toe.

"Let's go home," he said softly. "This has been all wrong."

He drove rapidly back to town. Connie said nothing but lay back limply against the seat, and Bill was glad of the silence. When they had parked the car in Graham's garage, Bill accompanied her to the front door and then said gently:

"I'm awfully sorry about all this. You seem just a child to me, you see, and, besides, I couldn't play any tricks on Professor Graham's niece. Be a sport, won't you, and leave me alone?"

For a moment she stood beside him and looked

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down thoughtfully at the steps; then she smiled up at him and asked unexpectedly, "Who was that pure boy who got the Holy Grail or something because he was so pure?"

"Galahad?"

"Yes; that's the boy. You're terribly Galahadish, aren't you?"

Bill preferred her slap to the taunt. His cheeks grew hot and his hands twitched.

"Good night," he said angrily and turned away. As he strode rapidly down the walk, his legs grew stiff and hingeless; Connie was giggling.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE next morning Bill saw Connie as he was returning to his dormitory from his ten o'clock class. She was crossing the campus and seemed utterly unaware of the stares of the students who crowded the path. She walked with downcast eyes, a shy child hastening home with a package under her arm. Safe in the crowd, Bill stared and could hardly believe that the lovely little girl was the brazen Delilah of the night before.

"She probably isn't half as wild as she seems," he thought generously. "She's petted a bit and picked up some phrases like 'sex appeal' and thinks she's sophisticated. She's just a baby playing with fire."

That afternoon he was startled from his studying by a loud hail from the first floor: "Bill—Bill Royce! oh, Bill Royce!"

He went to the head of the stairs and called down: "Hello. I'm here. What do you want?"

"Telephone, Bill. High heels."

A girl telephoning to him? Bill wondered who

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it could be as he started down the stairs. Then suddenly he knew and stopped, one foot poised in the air, his hand clutching the banister railing. He leaned over the balustrade and opened his mouth to roar that he wasn't in when he heard the boy below say cheerfully, "Yeah, Bill's here. He'll be right down."

Bill ripped out a barnyard oath and raced down the stairs.

"Yes," he said into the telephone. "This is Bill Royce."

"This is Connie Milburn, Bill. I want to see you."

"I can't. I'm busy."

"Oh, Bill, I must."

"I'm sorry," he said sternly, "but I'm too busy. You'll have to excuse me."

"It'll take just a minute."

Bill made up his mind then and there that Connie Milburn wasn't going to take one second of his time, and two minutes later the resolution was as if it had never been.

"I'm awfully sorry," he repeated, "but I just can't do it. Please don't insist."

"I'll drive over and wait outside your dormitory."

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"Please, Connie; I honestly haven't time."

"All right then; I'll come up to your room."

"*What?*"

"I'll come up to your room." The voice held nothing but innocence and a wish to be helpful.

"You will not! Why, I'd be fired out of college—and your uncle would be disgraced." Bill was red with fear and anger. He wasn't an immovable body, he found, and he had met an irresistible force.

"Well, then," suggested the gentle voice, "supposing you come outside when I toot my horn."

"Oh, all right." Bill made no effort to be pleasant, and he made none five minutes later when she drove up to the dormitory and stopped her car. He was waiting on the steps, feeling sure that she would never wait for him to come downstairs.

"Hello, Bill," she cried cheerily, waving her hand. "Get in and sit down."

"No," said Bill, standing resolutely by the car; "I'll stay here. I'm afraid you might drive away."

"You *are* cute. That's just what I meant to do." Connie smiled at him and patted his hand, which he had thoughtlessly placed on the car door.

He repeated that he was very busy, and so she

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came quickly to business; she wanted him to take her to the Junior Prom the next week. Bill promptly declined. She insisted. Two hours later he wearily climbed the three flights of stairs. He didn't know how it had happened but he had promised to take her to the Prom.

Bill's hope that Connie would make him forget Patricia was about as futile as his efforts to rid himself of Connie. Patricia grew more desirable, more queenly, more womanly beautiful in contrast; and although he had to confess to himself that he was attracted to Connie, he knew exactly what the attraction was. Even while her tenacity shocked and tortured him, he had to grant it a certain unwilling admiration. What Connie wanted she got—or died fighting for it. When she telephoned the second time, he was brusque and impatient with her but was forced again to give in and see her. He asked the two students who usually answered the telephone to say he was out any time a girl called, and then took to studying in the library or in Freddy Schiller's room. Occasionally the plan worked, but Connie managed to see him seven times in the ten days which elapsed before the Prom. She had a plan of her own and it was simple; she merely waited in her

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roadster before his dormitory until he returned. Scores of boys attempted to flirt with her, but she ignored them as if they did not exist. "They're just children," she explained loftily to Bill.

Graham stopped Bill one day as he was leaving the classroom. "Walk over to Wilton Hall with me," he said. "I want to talk to you."

"Is Connie making life miserable for you?" he asked as they left the building together.

"Yes, sir," Bill answered emphatically, "she is. I wish you'd send her home."

"I've tried to but she won't go. She's making herself notorious, too, I'm afraid, and I don't know what to do about it. I wrote to her parents, and her mother wrote back that I was worrying needlessly. She said I didn't understand the younger generation. God knows I don't." Graham hugged the books under his arm and tried with hopping little steps to keep pace with Bill's long stride.

Bill said nothing, and Graham glanced up keenly at him. "She's curious," he continued after a pause. "She's generous to a fault and unbelievably helpful. She's never had to do anything at home, but she works around our house as if she were paid for it. She says she adores you

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and that you're like Galahad. I'm surprised she ever heard of him."

Bill laughed shortly. "She thinks Galahad was a sap. So do I, for that matter—but I'd rather be Galahad than a toy for her to play with. She's too pretty to be running around loose this way."

Again Graham flashed a sharp glance, and his quick mind easily bridged the long hiatus between Bill's last two sentences. "I think I understand, Bill," he said seriously, stopping at the door of Wilton Hall, "and I'll do my best to get her to leave right after Prom. There's no use trying to get her to go before then; she'd rather miss salvation than the Prom. How did you happen to ask her to go?"

"I didn't ask her," Bill replied, grinning sheepishly. "She asked me and I said no. I still don't know why I changed my mind, but after two hours of arguing I came to and found I had a date with her. It isn't easy to shake her off, sir."

"I don't imagine it is." Graham shook his head and muttered, "I don't understand such girls. No reticence, no pride—just children crying 'gimme.'" He looked up and added more clearly: "I'm sorry, Bill. I'm fond of Connie in a way, but I don't approve of her. Come around

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to see us after she's gone. Until then—God help you and me, too."

The Prom provided its bit of drama, but it wasn't the unpleasant experience Bill had feared it would be. As they drove up to the gymnasium in Connie's car, she asked him if he had remembered to bring a flask of liquor.

"No," he replied shortly; "I didn't forget and I didn't bring any. I'm one of those senile old fogies that don't like drunken brawls. I like liquor with men; I don't drink it with little girls."

"You're just a Mid-Victorian ol' granny," she asserted, sneering her contempt. "You're so pure you make me sick. I just *loathe* your purity—what I mean! Do you expect me to last till three G.M. on nothing?"

"We'll go home now if you want," Bill offered as he parked the car. "I'll take you home any time you say but I won't go on a souse with you."

Connie opened the door of the car and bounced to the ground. "Come on, Galahad," she cried, suddenly gay. "Dust off your purity and park it here in the car. Let's have a good time."

Bill was angry as they climbed the gymnasium steps. He was always angry when he was with Connie, and she was usually angry when she was

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with him. It was a curious relationship. They seemed to have been open enemies since that first evening, and yet Bill had to fight every minute to withstand the attraction she had for him, and he knew his attraction for her was equally potent; indeed, she never ceased telling him how potent it was. There was war between them. There had to be war or complete surrender. Her rage was a weapon of attack; Bill's his only armor. Without it he would have been a quick captive to her charm.

She was an experienced and delightful dancer and, Bill found, a shameless one—at least, with him. He infuriated her by holding her firmly away from him while they danced, and the angrier she grew, the farther away he held her. He introduced her to every man he knew, and thanked heaven as the evening grew older that the stags found her attractive. She was an immediate success, and when Bill began to dance with her at midnight, he was immediately cut in on. For the next two hours he had a very good time dancing with Harry Coombs's faithful Celia, several other girls to whom he was presented, and a dusky beauty from New York whom Freddy Schiller had imported with great pride.

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At a little after two Bill noticed Connie near the front door with a sophomore whose reputation was noisome. He was a handsome youth with a gift for dissipation and a trick of advertising it. Bill walked up to them and asked Connie for the next dance.

"Galahad," she murmured, swaying gently, "good ol' Gal—Gal-lal-a-lad."

The boy snickered. Bill whirled on him. "Get out of here," he said in a fierce whisper, and the offending youth, seeing the angry gleam in Bill's eyes, faded quickly into the crowd of dancers.

"Come on, Connie," Bill said, taking her by the arm; "let's get some air." She grinned up at him weakly and permitted him to lead her where he wished. He retrieved their coats from the check room, slipped her fur coat on her, and led her out of the gymnasium and down the steps. Once they were out of range of the lights, he stooped down, put his arm under her knees and picked her up. Surprisingly, she did not protest; she merely giggled and clung to his neck. He deposited her not very gently in the car, said sternly, "Sit there," and seated himself beside her.

As he backed the car away from the curb, she said something.

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"What?" Bill asked.

"Gal-lal-lal-la," she mumbled and went to sleep.

There was a fountain in front of one of the dormitories. Bill stopped near it, wet his handkerchief, and washed Connie's face. She tried to fight him off when the cold water awakened her, but he was persistent. He held her firmly and washed until she was well awake; then he took her riding for an hour, and during that time neither said a word. Eventually Bill decided that she was sober enough to return home.

When he had unlocked the door and handed her the key, she turned to him and said softly, "You'll be sorry, Bill Royce."

"Grrr!" mocked Bill, laughing. "Beware, Jack Desmond; I'll foil you yet."

"I hate you!" she cried, stamping her little foot. "I just *loathe* you!"

"You've told me that before," Bill retorted, "and I hope you hate me enough now to leave me alone."

"I won't! You'll be sorry!" Swinging around quickly, she disappeared and slammed the door in his face.

In the next two weeks she doubled her atten-

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tions, and the more they irritated Bill, the more pleased she was. He was astonished at the hate he cherished for her, and at times he was aghast at her open hate for him. Graham told him again that he was trying to send Connie home but that she refused to go. The situation was ridiculous, and the strain was intense.

More and more Patricia filled Bill's mind, and eventually he understood his love for her. Years before he had been startled by the fact that he had no choice in the women who attracted him physically. There had been a girl in high school who was passionately in love with him. She was pretty and intelligent. Twice he had kissed her. She had trembled, and he had been as calm as if he were kissing his mother. Then there had been another girl, a prostitute whom he had met in a dance hall. He had gone there for a lark with another boy and the girl had spoken to him, asked him to dance with her. He had run from that girl as from sin itself, terrified by the emotion she aroused in him. At seventeen he had been ashamed of the attraction of a woman he despised, and now at twenty-five he was furious with himself because he could not argue away Connie's attraction. He disliked her more than

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any one he had ever known—and he had had to remind himself a hundred times that she was Graham's niece. He even disliked her more for the attraction, but that did not make it less.

He had never been ashamed of or irritated by Patricia's similar attraction for him, but that was glorified by affection and respect. There, he decided, was the answer: when a man found a girl whose body and mind were lovely to him, he had found his mate. There was nothing new in the discovery; it was as old as man and woman, but each man has to discover it for himself, and in hating and desiring Connie, Bill came to understand his love for Patricia. With that understanding, his need for her grew. There were times when he felt he had to see her, come what would.

He asked Harry if Patricia were in Larchmont, and Harry said no, she was in California. "Pat's been awfully restless," he explained. "She went to Florida last winter and only stayed a month, though she expected to stay three. Then she visited mother a while. Now she's out in California with her mother. I guess they won't be back for a few months. They're going to Yellowstone before they come back."

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To his own surprise, Bill was relieved by the information. Patricia's absence prevented him from humbling himself; blind fate was saving his pride.

One night in the first week in June he thought he heard somebody in his room. He listened, heard nothing, and went to sleep again. Ages later, it seemed, he felt cool arms around his neck, a soft, warm body close to his. Half sleeping, half awake, he moved; then his arms tightened.

CHAPTER XIX

WHEN Bill woke up the next morning, he was alone. He lay in bed a long time, hating himself, hating Connie. Yet there was a feeling of relief too; the inevitable had happened. Perhaps Connie would leave him alone now. But Tommy Graham? How could he face him? He shivered and crawled slowly out of bed.

There was an envelope lying on the floor. "From Connie, I suppose," he thought bitterly and mentally applied a string of epithets to that young woman such as Galahad never knew.

To his surprise, the note was from Graham.

"Dear Bill," it read:

"Won't you come to my office at eleven to-day? I'm not going to hold class. I'm very anxious to see you. Please come—and believe me,

"Most sincerely your friend,

"Thomas Graham."

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For a long time Bill stared at the note. "Most sincerely your friend. . . ." What a curious way to end a few lines. "Believe me, most sincerely your friend. . . ." Curious, mighty curious. . . . What did Tommy Graham know?

Bill's wonder and discomfort grew when Graham locked the door after admitting him to his office.

"I don't want to be interrupted," he explained quietly, but Bill detected weariness in his voice. All the perky snap seemed gone out of Graham; he looked very tired, the lines in his face were deeper, there was no sparkle in his brown eyes.

"Sit down, Bill," he said, seating himself behind the desk. He waited until Bill was seated and had lighted a cigarette; then he continued: "I don't know how to begin; so I won't try to be tactful. I'll spring it all at once. Connie's gone home—and I know what happened last night."

Bill's face flamed red and his eyes fell. "I'm sorry, sir," he muttered huskily.

He did not see Graham's kindly look, but he did hear the friendliness in his voice as he went on speaking quietly:

"Connie's gone because Jane and I told her she had to go. She understands that she will never

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be welcome again. And we want to offer our apologies to you, Bill."

Astonished, Bill looked up. "Apologies, sir? You've done nothing."

"We feel we have. We were innocent, of course, when we first foisted her on you; but we knew she was being troublesome and didn't send her home. We asked her to go several times, but we didn't have the heart to be firm. Now it's only good luck that she hasn't disgraced you—perhaps had you dismissed from college. We got you into the situation, and it was our duty to get you out of it." Graham was very grave, deeply ashamed and unhappy.

For the first time Bill looked him in the eye.

"I'm sorry you feel that way, Professor Graham," he said earnestly. "I'm not a child. There's no reason you should feel you have to protect me. I'm responsible—and I'm afraid it isn't going to do much good to say I'm ashamed."

Graham held up his hand and thrust it protestingly toward Bill. "Wait! Please don't apologize. I told you I knew what happened, but I didn't tell you how I knew or how much." Graham was all energy again; Bill's apology distressed him and, at the same time, revived him.

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"I'm going to explain in a minute, but tell me first how Connie got into your room. She said she just walked in."

"She did. The lock's always been broken—and I remember now I said something about it to her last week when all that stealing was going on."

"I see. I see. Whatever she is, apparently she isn't a liar." Quietly then Graham told his story. Mrs. Graham, he said, had awakened him at three o'clock that morning and told him that some one was in the house. He had looked into the hall and seen Connie slipping downstairs. Dressing hurriedly, he had followed her, but she was entering a dormitory when Graham was fully fifty yards away. Not knowing to which room she was going, he could do nothing but wait outside until she emerged and then follow her home. After breakfast he and Mrs. Graham had questioned her and she had confessed everything. "He was always so damned pure," she had said, "I just wouldn't stand for it."

Graham smiled wearily at Bill. "Don't blame yourself, my boy. It's a wonder you held out as long as you did. You acted admirably throughout. That on Connie's testimony—and she hates you." He rubbed his forehead as if he were try-

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ing to bring understanding into his mind. "I can't comprehend such a girl. She's been decently brought up, but she's vicious. That's the only word—vicious."

As Graham talked, Bill experienced the greatest relief of his life, and his love and admiration for Graham grew with every word he said. So few men would understand as he did; so few of them would make such an effort to save a man's self respect and pride.

"You're awfully kind, sir," he said gratefully. "I don't know how to thank you."

"Don't thank me. I have no thanks coming. I just hope you'll forgive me for troubling you with such a—such a—with Connie."

Bill found to his surprise that Connie was no longer hateful to him. He was happy to be rid of her but he didn't hate her. Safe himself, he could even find it in his heart to give her a little sympathy.

"Don't be too hard on Connie, Professor Graham," he urged gently. "I'll admit I've wanted to kill her lots of times, but she's pitiful just the same. I guess she's vicious, all right, but she wasn't born that way. You've known rich men's sons, haven't you, who were always hunt-

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ing new sensations because they didn't know what else to do? I knew several in the athletic club at home. They were bored all the time, and most of them would have given their souls for a new kick of some kind. The best most of them could do was to gamble and buy expensive women.

"Well, Connie's like that. She's had everything and done everything. She's vicious because she's selfish—and it's her folks' fault. They've never denied her anything. She wanted me because she couldn't get me; that's all—and I was the first thing in a long time she couldn't get. She's shallow and spoiled."

"Perhaps," acknowledged Graham; "but when she was talking this morning, I couldn't see that she had any more morals than a cat."

"She hasn't, I guess—but she hasn't been taught to have any. You can't very well develop moral sense, can you, if you get everything you want from the time you're born? She's been taught to give in to her desires. I've always thought you developed moral strength by fighting them. Connie didn't care whether she hurt you and me or not. That's where she was vicious. I've known girls I admired who weren't moral in

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a sexual sense, but they weren't selfish; they were just passionate."

"I see," said Graham, nodding his head slowly; "I see. I'm glad you feel that way about it, Bill. You have reason to hate her."

Then Bill laughed. "Oh, no," he cried. "She hasn't hurt me. I'm not so moral I can afford to be superior. I'm glad she's gone, but I'm awfully sorry you and Mrs. Graham are so upset. I'm particularly sorry about Mrs. Graham. She must be dreadfully shocked."

"She is," Graham admitted, and then the old delightful grin wrinkled his homely face. "Connie told her this morning that she was just Mid-Victorian. Her scorn was epic."

A week later Bill was astonished to discover that he hadn't thought of Connie for three days. For a month she had made his life miserable, but once she was gone, she was as unimportant as if she had never been. Only in one way would he remember her; she had made Patricia a thousand times more dear. Sometimes he thought he was a fool for having obeyed Patricia's orders; at other times he knew he was wise; Patricia would permit no man to sweep her off her feet. If she ever wanted him, she would send for him or come to

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him; he would accomplish nothing by going to her of his own initiative.

Examinations came and went. Again he had good-by to say—a real good-by to Freddy Schiller, who was taking his degree and who would leave for France a week after his graduation. He asked Bill for one of his football pictures. “If I’m ever frightened, I’ll look at that,” he said. “You’ve been my strength, Bill,” and Bill had been ashamed to find tears in his own eyes.

Good-by to Freddy and Harry and the Grahams and casual good-bys to other people he happened to see; then back home, back to the old job—but this summer no Patricia to look forward to seeing. He felt very tired as he walked down the hill to the station.

CHAPTER XX

BILL had begun part-time work with a large manufacturing company in his second year in high school. At first he had worked in the shipping room, but when he went on full time during his mother's illness, he was promoted to the office of the foreign department, and there he had stayed ever since. Foreign trade fascinated him; there was a touch of romance to it that captured his imagination. Writing a letter to Chicago was just routine; writing one to Shanghai or Bombay was exciting. By the time he was a freshman in college, he knew that he wanted to become an expert in foreign markets, and so far as possible he shaped his course of study to that end. He wanted an education first of all, but he found that it was not impossible to combine the training he needed with it. He had acquired a good reading knowledge of French and German, and he planned to take a double course in Spanish in his senior year. He had crammed in as much history and geography as possible and taken every course

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in economics he could find which ploughed the ground in his chosen field.

The foreign department of the Stedman Company was in charge of Charles Robinson. He early saw possibilities in Bill and had encouraged him both in the office and in college by his interest and approval. It was due to him that Bill had a good job waiting every summer, and it was due to him, too, that Bill received better pay than is customary for a part-time job.

In September he asked Bill if he could depend on him to return to the company when he had received his degree. Bill replied that he was going to be terribly disappointed if he couldn't.

Two weeks later Bill was summoned to the president's office. He was surprised and pleased. The company employed many thousands of people, and it was something to be singled out for attention by its president. Knowing that his work had Mr. Robinson's full approval, he felt sure that the summons would not develop into a reprimand.

He was curious, too, to meet Mr. Stedman, who was somewhat unusual in that he had attained distinction both as a business man and a scholar. He had a passion for tapestries and early armor, and

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had written several highly praised books about them.

In appearance he suggested the scholar rather than the business man. He was tall and spare with a thin arched nose, keen gray eyes, and a firm, ascetic mouth. His iron gray hair was abundant and brushed straight back from his high forehead. He looked sharply at Bill through large tortoise-shell rimmed spectacles and offered him a long, thin white hand.

After gripping Bill's hand with an unexpected strength, he pointed to a comfortable chair and then seated himself behind the largest desk Bill had ever seen. It was bare except for a blotter pad and a few papers.

"I'm glad to meet you, Mr. Royce," he said pleasantly, leaning an elbow on the desk. "Mr. Robinson has spoken of you repeatedly, and two weeks ago he came to me because he wanted to find a permanent position for you after you graduated from college."

Bill was displeased to find himself a little nervous; he felt as he had often felt before a football game when he was in high school—tremulous and weak in the pit of his stomach. The interview was so important. Somehow he did not realize

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until Mr. Stedman began speaking that he had been working all his life for what that interview was going to produce, and if it produced little, the disappointment was going to be bitter. He said, "Yes, sir," respectfully and waited.

"As you may know, Mr. Robinson thinks very highly of you," Mr. Stedman continued. "You have been a sort of protégé of his, haven't you?"

"Yes, sir. Mr. Robinson has been wonderfully kind to me."

"I'm glad you feel that way, because even if your work is excellent, as I have no doubt it is, you can hardly merit the fifty dollars a week you are receiving—I mean since you are here only three months out of the year."

"I was surprised when Mr. Robinson raised me to that," Bill said earnestly, and then he smiled. "I was mighty glad, too. It wasn't just that I need the money; I was glad because Mr. Robinson thought that well of me."

"I like your attitude." Mr. Stedman nodded his head approvingly. "So many young men always feel underpaid regardless of what they receive." He rubbed his chin thoughtfully, eyed Bill in frank appraisal, and then said, "Mr. Robinson wants me to hold open a really big position for

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you, Mr. Royce—not big to start with but limitless almost in its promise and possibilities. He wants me to make you assistant manager of the foreign department.”

Bill gasped. In his most optimistic dreams, he had not thought of so splendid an opportunity. His poise deserted him and he stuttered boyishly, “That—that would be wonderful, sir.”

“It would,” Mr. Stedman agreed, smiling, “but don’t be too happy about it yet. I haven’t promised it to you. And I might as well say now that you will not receive the salary the position is worth if I do promise it to you. You will have every chance to advance rapidly, but I’m not willing to start you at more than five thousand.”

Again Bill gasped, but he managed to make a coherent reply. “I couldn’t be worth more than that to begin with—if I’m worth that much. I’m willing to begin at almost anything just so long as I have a chance to work up.”

“You’ll have every chance to work up just as high as you are capable of going,” Mr. Stedman stated crisply. He rustled the papers on his desk and added, “I have the greatest faith in Mr. Robinson’s judgment, but in an appointment as important as this one, I like all the data I can

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get; so I wrote to the dean at Raleigh and to Professor Graham."

"Professor Graham, sir?" Bill exclaimed, astonished. "How did you know about him?"

"You have spoken of him a number of times to Mr. Robinson, and I happen to know him slightly. He gave me some help several years ago on one of my books." Again he looked keenly at Bill and said, "The letters aren't as complimentary as I had hoped."

Bill's nervousness departed as if by magic and he sat up straight in his chair and prepared to fight. "I hope the dean didn't say anything good about me," he said vigorously. "I'd hate to have his approval. I'm sorry, though, about Professor Graham. He has been very kind to me and I thought he liked me."

"He does—very much. He thinks very highly of you, indeed, in many ways, but—and this may surprise you, since you seem contemptuous of the dean—Professor Graham makes the same objection to you that the dean does."

"The dean doesn't like me because I won't be a regular little rah-rah boy," Bill explained, showing his contempt openly, "and I don't like him because I think he's one. He thinks I'm impor-

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tant because I'm on the football team. He wouldn't care anything about me if I weren't."

"Aren't you a little harsh?"

"No, sir, I'm not. Any member of the team can get away with anything. Why, one of the tackles was caught red-handed cheating last term, and the dean exonerated him on such a flimsy excuse that the whole college laughed. And I know a little Italian fellow who over-cut chapel twice and was expelled for a year." Bill was so indignant that he forgot tact and the importance of the man to whom he was talking. "Why," he continued, "he came into the locker room between halves in the Sanford game last year and made a speech to the team that made even Sam Ross ashamed. A freshman couldn't have been more hysterical."

Mr. Stedman smiled safely behind his hand. He had seen the dean perform once or twice and knew fairly well the type of perpetual undergraduate he represented.

"Well, let's ignore the dean then," he said amiably. "I take it, however, that you respect Professor Graham's opinion."

"Very much, sir," Bill admitted. "I'm mighty sorry if he thinks badly of me. There's nobody

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whose good opinion I want more than his." It made him feel a little sick to think that Tommy Graham had spoken disapprovingly of him; he needed Graham's respect—it was essential to his pride.

"Don't misunderstand," Mr. Stedman said quickly, noting the depression in Bill's face. "In most ways he thinks very highly of you; indeed, I consider his letter a very fine recommendation. It's only in one way that he's dubious."

He hunted among the papers on his desk and selected a single sheet. "I'm going to be a little unethical and show you the last page of his letter. I'm doing this because I'm quite sure he wouldn't mind. If you can explain the objection, I shall be very much pleased. I'm free to confess I think it's serious." He handed the sheet to Bill; and, curious and unhappy, Bill read:

"Much as I like and admire Royce, I must confess that he has one serious shortcoming, especially for a position such as you describe where he will have to manage men. He is heartily disliked here at Raleigh and, so far as I can see, he is entirely responsible for his unpopularity. His scorn for the normal undergraduate pleasures is boundless, and he has taken no pains to hide his scorn. There

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is no reason why he shouldn't be liked by the boys: he is handsome, athletic, well mannered, and intelligent. I am sure he must have been courted when he came to college, but with very few exceptions he has repelled all advances.

"I have heard him talk about student life, and I admit at once that he is entirely sound and logical in all he says about it. He shows, however, a rather serious lack of understanding of American boys, and that lack of understanding in an athlete is extraordinary. He seems, in brief, to have no conception of play. I have even heard him speak of football as a job. Such a point of view is inexplicable to me. Royce has had a hard row to hoe and he is naturally more serious than most of the undergraduates, but other boys have a hard time of it too without losing their youth. One shouldn't reduce pleasure to reason as he does; at twenty-four or five one should still be capable of unreasonable and altogether delightful idiocy. Royce is altogether too logical.

"I have often thought of speaking to him about this matter but always refrained because one can't reason about emotional reactions. If he can't *feel* youthful, I can't make him by talking to him. I should like, nevertheless, to see him lose his sound

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sense just once and do something either sublime or absurd merely because overpowering emotion drove him to it."

There was more to the letter, but it was those paragraphs that reached into Bill like a sharp, brutal knife. He looked up when he had finished reading, laid the paper on the desk, and asked softly, "Am I unpopular in the office, sir?"

"No; very popular, on the contrary. That was one reason Mr. Robinson urged your appointment as assistant manager." He paused and asked, "Do you understand Professor Graham's objection?"

Mr. Stedman was surprised at the pain in Bill's brown eyes. Royce must be exceptionally sensitive, he thought; but, then, he could not know that Bill was thinking of Patricia and a night on the beach near Larchmont.

"I've heard the objection before," Bill said honestly. "I couldn't understand it then and I can't now. I can't be passionate about play. I enjoy football but I can't feel that it's important. I wouldn't join fraternities or do that sort of thing because I didn't want to be bothered; I wanted to study. I've always known I was unpopular at college, but I didn't care. I get along with the people here because I respect what they're doing. The

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college fellows don't like me because I wouldn't accept class offices and paddle freshmen and be a regular little rah-rah boy. I can't understand why Professor Graham thinks I should be one."

Mr. Stedman studied him in silence and arranged the papers on his desk. "I see," he said thoughtfully. "I see. You weren't interested in college life?"

"No, sir; I wanted an education."

"Then you think there's no education in college life?"

"No, I don't," Bill responded emphatically. "Part of it is childish play and part of it is endless talk about girls and religion. I get more out of one evening with Professor Graham than most of the fellows do out of a whole term of bull sessions. Yes," he added pugnaciously, "and I get more pleasure, too."

"I see," Mr. Stedman said again; "I see. You don't seem to be able to give your heart to anything you don't consider work."

"It depends on what you call work, sir. If you mean my working here or studying, I find work a pleasure. I can't give my heart to cheering the team, though."

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Bill was surprised to see Mr. Stedman smile and he was dumbfounded when he said: "I think Professor Graham's analysis of you is quite wrong. He's been among young people too long to have the right perspective. You aren't too mature or too logical, Mr. Royce; you're just very young."

"What?" Bill felt as if he were being spanked. "I—I don't understand."

"Undue seriousness isn't nearly so much a characteristic of age as of youth, and so far as business is concerned, it is not a bad characteristic. You may be very frivolous by the time you are thirty-five and feel comparatively safe. In the meantime, I think your popularity in the office quite offsets your unpopularity at college. At any rate, I think I'm willing to take the chance Mr. Robinson has asked me to take." He rose and held out his hand. "Unless you hear something to the contrary in the next week, Mr. Royce, you can expect that assistant managership to be waiting for you when you take your degree."

As Bill grasped Mr. Stedman's hand, he felt a trifle dizzy. Things went too fast and life held too many contradictions. And, happy as he was over Mr. Stedman's promise, his confusion stayed

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with him. He had lost the girl he wanted because he didn't know how to play, and Tommy Graham had almost lost him the job he wanted for exactly the same reason. He began to think that play must be a very serious business.

CHAPTER XXI

TWO days before Bill returned to college, he received a letter from Mr. Stedman confirming the appointment. "Unless something very unexpected occurs in the next nine months to make us change our minds," he wrote, "you can count on having the position when you graduate." Bill was pleased but not so overjoyed as he should have been; Tommy Graham's disapproval had taken much of the glory from his promotion.

Once back at Raleigh, he told Graham of his talk with Mr. Stedman and asked Graham to explain his objection.

"I'm glad Stedman showed you that part of my letter, Bill," Graham said kindly. "I rather hoped he would. I can't explain the joy of play to you. It's something you have to feel. I'm not condemning you, my boy; it's just that I'm sorry for you. College is a romantic place, and you're missing the romance. You're a hard student and so am I, but in more than thirty years as student and teacher, the glamour of college

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hasn't been dimmed for me. I'm younger than you are, Bill. I can still be so thrilled by something that I don't care whether it's important or not. You try to live by reason. Maybe you're wise, but I'd rather be foolish occasionally."

Bill argued and Graham smiled. Joy, he said, wasn't material for argument; it was often greatest because it was unreasonable. He insisted that being a hero was as worth while as having a hero, and that admiration, whether received or given, was part of the salt of life. Loyalty, blind or clear-eyed, had its place, too, and time was often most precious when it was wasted.

Bill complained that he was talking in paradoxes.

Again smiles meshed the network of wrinkles which lined Graham's face. "Paradoxes," he said, "are often more truthful than truth itself—and if that's a paradox, too, I can't help it."

There wasn't much comfort in the talk for Bill. Life wasn't so simple as Graham made it—or so paradoxical, either. Perhaps the race wasn't always to the swift or the battle to the strong, but the speediest runner won if he wasn't tripped, and strength never lost a battle for any man. And if college wasn't the place to gain speed and

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strength for the battle of life, what was it? Surely not the playground most of the boys made it. Play? Of course, play was all right. Did everybody think he didn't want to play? But play was the reward of work well done, and when he had done his work well he had no time and not much energy for play.

Play could furnish its own paradoxes, for that matter. There was Harry Coombs, for example. He hadn't missed any of the play college offered, and his play demanded more work than his work did. He was so "active in activities" that he was usually worn out and could bring only a fagged brain to his studies. Harry, Bill was fair enough to admit to himself, was perhaps an extreme example, but Harry was the most popular man in his class just as Bill was the most unpopular. He offered, therefore, the most perfect contrast.

Bill wasn't happy as the term began. The dislike of the students he could stand, but he could not stand Patricia's disapproval and Graham's. He could not shrug off their opinions contemptuously. Over and over again he wondered what they wanted of him. They didn't want him to turn into a back-slapper, they didn't want him to dissipate, they didn't want him to neglect his

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studies, but they wanted him to play; they wanted him to change his mental attitude, to feel an emotional delight in things he considered unimportant.

Football, Patricia had said, must be taken seriously if one is to enjoy it. Well, he did enjoy it; he enjoyed any physical contest, but why must a mature man throw himself passionately into a football game? That season he tried to care; he tried to play for the sake of the team instead of for the sake of twenty-five dollars a week, and he failed rather pitifully. Harry Coombs was the captain, and that helped. He could play hard for Harry, but, try as he would, he could not play hard for Raleigh College. Harry was a friend and therefore mattered; Raleigh College was only an educational opportunity. It he could not love.

He gave his best to the team, nevertheless, but better than his best was needed. He and Harry and a rather weak guard were the only experienced players on the squad, and the other men had plenty of passion to offer but not much skill. Sam Ross was a good coach and quite capable of building a fine team around one star player, but if the star is to be given his opportunities, the other ten men must at least be competent—and

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Ross could not drill competence into a group of men without natural aptitude. He had a great back-field man in Bill, he had a very good quarter-back in Harry, and he had a lot of other men who tried hard and got rather badly in the way.

Bill was worked unmercifully that season and so was Harry. They played every minute of every game, and if either had been injured, the team would have ceased to exist. Harry ran the team and inspired it to play better than it knew how; Bill furnished all the offensive strength and about half the defensive. He was a giant among pigmies, and there were times when he felt he could play better if he were left alone on the field with Harry.

That team simply could not play football, and yet it managed to have a fairly successful season. True, it won only one game out of the first five, but the defeats were always by slight margins. Bill managed to score in every game regardless of the strength of the other team, and Lady Luck herself seemed to be rolling the dice for Raleigh. Some one on the opposing team always fumbled at a crucial moment or brought down a fifteen-yard penalty when fifteen yards meant the loss of a goal. Raleigh "got all the breaks," but Ross

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knew and the students knew that a team can't depend forever on luck, and as the Sanford game approached, gloom spread like a black mist over the Raleigh campus. The game with Sanford was the "big game," the game which mattered more than all the others combined. Sanford was to Raleigh as Yale is to Harvard or Stanford to California; the Sanford game was not only the climax of the season, it was the whole purpose of it. To win it was of cosmic importance; to lose it was woe unutterable.

At the rally preceding the Sanford game, Sam Ross assured the students that Raleigh would fight but that the boys had to get back of the team. He shook his big fist at them and roared, "Will you?" and they roared loyally in return, "Yes! You bet!"

Bill watched the rally apathetically and rather contemptuously. "Look at them trying to work themselves into a frenzy," he thought, mentally sneering. "It's like a low-grade revival meeting. We haven't the chance of a snowball in hell, and yet everybody goes on pretending that a lot of howling will turn a rotten team into a good one." He made a polite little speech, was wildly cheered, and returned to his seat feeling like a

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hypocrite. The fellows were acting as if they thought he could win that football game alone—and that showed just how much they knew about football. He'd like to see a few of them try to make yardage with a line like tissue paper to help them. Throwing forward passes wasn't exactly fun, either. He was always rushed, and when he did manage to get time for a throw nobody ever managed to get free to receive the pass. Why, the line seldom held long enough for him to get off a decent punt. Playing football with that team was like trying to roll mercury uphill.

He felt rather sorry on the whole for the Raleigh fellows. They knew they were going to be beaten and they didn't even have the courage to admit it. That was college spirit, he supposed—refusing to admit that a rotten team could be beaten by a good one. Of course, the team would play as hard and as well as it could. Anybody with any guts would do that. Just the same, Sanford was strong and Raleigh was weak—and the fellows who were betting their good money on Raleigh might have lots of loyalty and spirit but they had mighty poor sense.

Sam ordered the team to bed immediately the rally was over, but Bill calmly disobeyed orders

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and studied for two hours. Then, his work done, he went to bed. One more game to play and then the long grind would be over. Football had justified itself so far as he was concerned; it had largely paid for his college education. He stretched hugely in bed and relaxed. Almost done with it. . . . Thank God . . .

CHAPTER XXII

THE "big game" was at Raleigh that year. Hundreds of alumni were in town, reporters, Sanford alumni, almost two thousand Sanford undergraduates, and girls galore. Raleigh boasted no great stadium; its stands would accommodate less than ten thousand people, but they were full by the time the first whistle blew.

Queer, Bill thought, how enthusiastic the Raleigh alumni were, although the game was bound to be lop-sided with Raleigh on the wrong side. Sanford would win, the experts said, with fully twenty points to spare. The alumni, many of them white haired or bald, were as excited and eager as boys, and every one of them seemed to be looking happily forward to the miracle that would win the game for Raleigh. He supposed they were buoyed up by college spirit. As he walked among them on his way to the field, he decided that college spirit was a sort of emotional champagne which made men unreasonably and gloriously drunk. Certainly college spirit had

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nothing to do with common sense; that was evident enough. He supposed, too, that Graham would say that the charm of college spirit lay in its lack of reason. Perhaps—but Bill couldn't see that it would be less charming if it were more sensible. Oh, well, sense or nonsense, it was going to demand the impossible of him that day, and the mere possible was a task beyond the Raleigh team.

He played with the thought as he changed into his football togs. The possible by definition was something which could be done; and since the possible was something which could be done, such as winning the football game, the Raleigh team could do it—but the Raleigh team couldn't do it, and so the possible wasn't possible. Q. E. D.

The speciousness and uselessness of his argument amused him and he smiled as he dressed. A tackle, who had the neighboring locker, looked at him in astonishment. Bill was obviously perfectly calm, and the tackle was struggling sorrowfully with nausea. He wondered what Bill was thinking about, and the nausea would certainly have won if he had been told. As Bill laced his shoes, he was thinking, "It's philosophical, that argument is—like debating how many angels can

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stand on the point of a needle. Is the possible possible? Gosh, it's metaphysics. If Berkeley could get famous by arguing whether there was a noise in a forest when a tree fell if there was no one there to hear it, why couldn't I get famous by arguing that the possible isn't possible when it isn't possible?" He stamped his feet and stood up. He was still smiling, and the smile widened as he thought, "I'm supposed to run a hundred yards to a touchdown today. That's possible all right but ——"

Harry Coombs interrupted his philosophical whimsies.

"What in hell are you grinning about, Bill?" he asked nervously. "You're grinning like a fool. My jaw would fall off if I tried to smile."

Bill snapped his forefinger against Harry's padded chest. "Cheer up," he said lightly. "You're the gallant captain on the eve of a great victory. You know the poem. Now listen, Peterkin, you ——"

"Oh, don't!" Harry cried irritably. He was so nervous that his voice broke into a scream, his face was white, his blue eyes wide with strain, and his lips twitched constantly.

"I'm sorry, Harry," Bill apologized quickly.

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"I know I oughtn't to be facetious, but you oughtn't to be hysterical, either. Come on now; buck up." He slapped him on the shoulder and smiled encouragingly. "The world isn't revolving on this game, you know. You can't tell what may happen. The breaks may come our way."

"God, I hope so," Harry breathed fervently. "Sam says we've got to take chances—forward passes and ——" He stopped suddenly and his eyes grew blank with terror as he contemplated the danger of such a program.

"Play the game when the time comes," Bill advised. "I'll pass if you say pass. You can bank on that. I've got just one request. Don't call any plays through right guard. Nutter always gets in my way."

Harry pressed his hand against his forehead. "All right; all right. God! Can't we get out there and boot the ball or something? Where in hell is Sam?" He hurried across the locker room, tripping over a bench and bumping into a player before he reached Ross.

Most of the players were more nervous than Harry, and for the first few minutes of the game their nervousness stayed with them, and to all intents and purposes, Bill, plus Sanford's over-

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confidence, was Raleigh's salvation. Several Sanford plays were blocked by sheer stumbling luck, several more went wrong because the Sanford players were too sure they would go right, and Bill broke up a few more before they were well begun. He had that sixth sense which marks great players; he knew by some instinct where the play was going to be, and over and over again he smothered the key man and threw him for a loss.

By the time the second quarter began, the Raleigh team had itself well in hand and the Sanford team had lost its confidence. It began to fight; trick plays were discarded; the Sanford men tore through the weak Raleigh line. Raleigh's secondary defense was not bad; the full-back was powerful, the other half-back was fairly capable, and Bill and Harry wrecked play after play: yet nothing could stop Sanford's march down the field—five yards, three yards, two yards—eight yards, five yards, first down after first down; and then when Sanford was within fifteen yards of the goal, Bill threw the right half-back for a loss of ten yards. Recklessly, Sanford tried to recoup with a forward pass which Harry intercepted. Bill kicked magnificently. Sanford be-

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gan the march again on its own forty-yard line. After carrying the ball thirty yards in a few plays, Sanford fumbled and the Raleigh center fell on the ball. Again Bill kicked. Then with three forward passes in succession, Sanford scored. The quarter-back failed to kick the goal.

The Sanford cheering section was raucously jubilant; the Raleigh men depressed and forlorn. The inevitable was happening. Sanford was just beginning to play, and Raleigh was already playing better than it knew how; it would be bound to show its weaknesses soon. And because they felt so sure of losing, the boys in the Raleigh cheering section shouted as if victory were already theirs. Bill wished they wouldn't make so much noise; their yelping made it hard as hell to hear signals.

Sanford did not score again that quarter, although it was constantly on the offensive. Twice luck was with Raleigh, and three times Bill's long punts drove Sanford back into its own territory.

Sam Ross was a good coach and understood his men. He was capable on occasions of magnificent invective, but he used none of it between halves; instead he walked among his players, patting this one encouragingly on the shoulder, giving a word

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of kindly advice to that one, and exhibiting to them all a confidence which inspired them more than any scornful diatribe, however obscene, could have done. To Bill he said, "Great work, Bill—great work. You can score against that bunch." Bill grinned at him. "I mean it," Ross said positively. "That's not bull; you can." And to Harry he said in private, "Give Royce the ball—end runs."

When the team came on the field for the second half, the Raleigh cheering section rose to its feet as one man and shrieked its praise and faith. "They're sticking, anyhow," Bill thought, hardly aware of his own admiration. He had been rather badly bruised in the first half of the game, and there was a little imp of anger dancing in his brain. The Sanford team was out to "get" him; he was marked for slaughter—and he didn't like it. Twice he had been unfairly tackled. He felt a personal animosity against Sanford. Those boys up in the stands seemed to be swayed by the same emotion. For a moment he rather liked their cheering; it seemed to mean something.

Once the second half began, however, he forgot the cheering section, he even forgot his anger against the Sanford team; nothing remained but

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the game itself, his entire consciousness was centered on the football.

Sanford kicked off. Harry caught the ball and carried it to the Raleigh twenty-five-yard line before he was downed. On a run off left end, Bill made a first down; then, repeating the play, he made five yards more. A center rush failed. A delayed buck netted two yards only. Bill kicked and Sanford had the ball. Down the field they came, playing straight football again and making first down after first down. Ten yards from the Raleigh goal, they were penalized five yards for an offside play. Then Nutter, the weak Raleigh guard, broke through by some miracle and threw the left half-back for a three-yard loss. Desperate, Sanford again attempted a forward pass and failed to complete it. A second pass flew straight into the hands of Raleigh's surprised left end.

The gods were against Sanford. Once a fumble cost them a score, once a fifteen-yard penalty, and once they were held on the three-yard line, Bill having broken up three plays in succession. But their attack was too strong to be resisted forever; at the end of the third quarter

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they scored again, and this time the quarter-back kicked the goal.

In the first few minutes of the fourth quarter they swept down the field once more. They had scored only twice, they had made ten first downs to Raleigh's one, their own goal had never once been threatened, and yet fate had granted them only thirteen points. Lady Luck seemed determined to stick by Raleigh until the last gun of the last game of the season had been fired.

Down they came, first down after first down, until at last they were on Raleigh's five-yard line. The full-back tore at the line, slipped, and fell. The teams crouched in position for the next play. The full-back stepped back; the same formation was called. Bill moved. He saw the plan. The lines crashed—a Sanford end dashed over the goal-line and turned; the full-back threw the ball, Bill leaped and caught it. His feet never touched the ground; the Sanford quarter-back tackled him in mid-air and threw him flat.

Then something happened to Harry Coombs. All through the game he had played like a mad man, holding his team to fever pitch, driving them, encouraging them, almost fighting them into playing beyond their skill and strength. To

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Bill he had said nothing. Bill had played magnificently, superbly, and Harry had offered no advice or help where none was needed. Yet now he talked to Bill. Calling for time out, he drew Bill behind the goal-line and turned on him.

Bill was startled by the light in Harry's blue eyes. They blazed with mad excitement; his face was white beneath its grime; his upper lip was drawn back in a snarl. He was beside himself, a captain greater than his weak, broken team, a fighter who didn't know he was beaten, a crusader with a few minutes given him out of time to snatch eternal glory—and he meant to have it.

For a second he glared at Bill, and his eyes shot blue fire.

"You can do it, Bill," he cried, almost sobbing; "you can do it."

Wonderingly, Bill panted, "Do what?"

The question snapped the last fine thread of restraint. "Score, you goddamn fool!" Harry screamed, pounding Bill's chest with both fists. "Score!" His fists beat a hysterical tattoo, sobs tore out of his choked, tired lungs, his eyes blazed through tears: "Score! Do you hear?" Coming harder and faster, his blows drove Bill back-

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ward. "Score! I tell you, you gotta score. Bill, you gotta score!"

The boys in the bleachers watched. They did not know what was happening, but they guessed. "Bill Royce!" some one yelled. "Bill Royce!" Instantly thousands took up the cry. "Bill Royce—oh, Bill Royce!" "You gotta score!" Harry screamed above their shouts. "You gotta score!" "Oh, Bill Royce! Bill Royce!" Like thunder the name roared down on Bill—"Bill Royce, Bill Royce—oh, Bill Royce!" "Score, goddamn you," Harry shrieked; "score—oh, goddamn you, goddamn you——" "Bill Royce, Bill Royce, Bill Royce! . . . "

Bill never knew what happened to him. Something hard and cold in him melted and turned to fire; it blazed up and caught his brain; it burned away thought, reason, sanity; it possessed him like madness. He didn't see or hear; he didn't think; everything was gone but the madness, the crazy, blinding, driving madness. He stopped retreating, thrust his whole body forward fiercely, gripped Harry's shoulder, and shouted, "Shut up and play ball!"

Harry tore himself out of Bill's grip, signaled to the official, and called the team into a huddle.

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"What signal?" he said to Bill breathlessly.

Bill answered in a whisper that lashed like a whip: "What th' hell do I care? *Give me the ball!*"

Sam Ross on the side lines paced up and down. He had watched Harry and Bill and wondered what was going on. When he saw the formation the Raleigh team took and, in the solemn hush which hung over the field, heard the signals Harry called, he held his breath in admiration and fear. Harry was banking everything on Bill.

Bill stood far back. Maybe he was going to try an end run, maybe he was going to kick—probably he was going to pass. Suddenly he dashed to the left. Harry received the ball from the center and made a short lateral pass to Bill. Scooping the ball out of the air, Bill clutched it to his body and darted straight at the struggling mass of players. A tackle leaped at him; he paused, evaded the tackle, whirled as another man's arms surrounded him, straight-armed still another man, and broke to the left into an open field. A Raleigh end materialized out of the confusion and formed an interference. Bill made ten yards, twenty yards; the Sanford quarter-

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back was racing toward him; he swerved, hit something, and fell sprawling on the ground, a victim of his own teammate's clumsiness.

Raging at the end who had got in his way, he got to his feet and strode into position. The next instant some one in the stands leaped a foot in the air and screamed, "Bill's gone crazy!" He had been in high school with Bill and had graduated from Raleigh three years before. "Oh!" he shouted jubilantly, "Bill's gone crazy; Bill Royce's gone crazy!"

"What do you mean?" a score of people shouted at him. "What do you mean?"

"Look! Look!" The man danced up and down and shouted and pointed at Bill. "He's gone crazy!"

The man knew. Bill had torn off his headgear and hurled it to the side lines. When he was in high school, he had always played without a helmet in crucial moments; he couldn't stand one when the play became intense. It bound his head, cramped him, fairly tortured him. Now he could not stand it. He had never played a minute without a helmet since he had left high school. The man in the grandstand understood; Bill Royce had gone crazy—football crazy.

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Bill took the ball again on a hidden pass and raced around right end. This time the end took one man out for him and an instant later Harry took care of another; Bill swerved, whirled, side-stepped, paused, changed direction, raced forward at full speed, changed pace as a man approached to tackle, evaded him, straight-armed another man, broke into a run again—ten yards, twenty yards, thirty yards, forty yards; he swerved to avoid the safety man and went down, tackled from behind by the Sanford right half-back, a sprinter who was faster than Bill.

The air above the Raleigh cheering section was dark with hats and caps and banners; arms were waving; boys were pounding each other on the back and shouting hoarsely, "Oh, Bill Royce! Bill Royce! Didya see him? Oh, boy, Bill Royce!" They screamed their prayer to him, cheered him, pleaded with him, praised him. "Oh, Bil Royce. . . ."

The Raleigh players crouched into position; demoralized, the Sanford players crouched, then stood up, shifted, crouched again. The shouting died down. In a silence tense as fear, Harry's voice rang out:

"16, 28, 43, 75," six more numbers then ——

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Bill took the ball. The signal called for a run around right end. As the play started, he saw the Raleigh left-guard stumble. The boy started forward, then afraid he was off-side, drew back; Nutter, always clumsy, went forward and for the first time in the game made a hole. Twisting suddenly, Bill ignored the signal and all coach's rules, and dashed for the opening. Both teams were going toward his right—and he was off to the left.

A player was in his way. The man spun and fell, flung headlong by Bill's hand. Driven by the madness which was both pain and ecstasy, Bill tore himself out of another man's clutch, and then drove straight forward with a force that downed a third man and left the field clear except for the quarter-back. This time Bill did not swerve; he went for the goal, and as the quarter-back approached, he increased his speed and then changed pace, paused the tiniest fraction of a second, dodged—and, free, raced on to plant the ball over the line.

He did not hear the shouting, the endless, hysterical cries of, "Bill Royce, oh, Bill Royce!" There was a noise in his ears, some one—it was Harry—was pounding his back and yelling at

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him; other players were pounding his back—and there was that madness in his brain. His lungs hurt; it seemed as if he could not breathe, but he was alive in every fiber of his body and he wanted to play football.

“I’ll kick the goal!” he said fiercely to Harry, and in a hush that seemed to suspend the very pulse of life, he did kick it.

The next few minutes of play brought neither team any great advantage. Over and over again Sanford seemed on the verge of scoring, but luck and Bill were on the other side. Luck was their more powerful opponent, but Bill was more conspicuous. The spectators focused their attention on his unhelmeted head. It seemed to be everywhere. Where the ball was, there Bill was, too.

The Raleigh team was playing better than it knew how; Bill was doing more than a man could—yet slowly, inevitably, Sanford forced its way down the field again. It was determined to have one more score, and the time was almost up. Then in the last minute and a half of play, luck cast the dice again for Raleigh; a fumble cheated Sanford out of its score and gave Raleigh the ball.

Bill was panting, his eyes were curiously glazed,

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his hands jerked spasmodically, yet on the first play he broke through the Sanford line for a ten-yard gain. For a minute the Raleigh cheering section yelled insanely; then it went breathlessly quiet as suddenly as if it were a light that had been clicked off.

Harry barked the signals hoarsely. Bill received the ball. He waited. His arm drew back; fast and straight the ball sailed down the field; the left-end turned, paused, leaped into the air, caught the ball, and turning again started running, stumbled, and fell. The Raleigh shriek of triumph died into a groan of woe. A completed thirty-yard pass, a clear field, and—"Oh, if Bill Royce had only been on the other end!"

There were only a few seconds of play left. Harry called signal, and this time he dared the lateral pass to Bill again. Once again it was successful. Bill broke free from a tackler, straight-armed another man, evaded another, and then when victory seemed his, the world went blank. His right arm sought blindly before him, he wavered, paused, and with no man near him, he surrendered to the blows he had suffered and the strain he had endured, and fell trembling to the grass. The gun barked, the game was over, San-

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ford had won, but Bill did not know it. When his fellow players surrounded him and helped him to his feet, he tried to break away from them and complete the run.

Sanford had won the game, but the true victory was Bill's. There was little excitement in the Sanford serpentine; it was a performance rather than a celebration. There is no great satisfaction in winning a game by six points when you have expected to win it by at least twenty. The Sanford boys marched dutifully around the field, dutifully threw their hats over the crossbars of the goal posts, but their interest was not in their own antics but in what the Raleigh students were doing.

The Raleigh team had drawn together to give a cheer for Sanford, but in the midst of the cheer Bill was gripped by strong hands and dragged to the bleachers. He was too weak, too tired, to resist; all his strength had been given to the game, he had none left. He alone of all the Raleigh eleven was unhappy. He felt that the loss of the game was a defeat; the others felt that it was a victory. Even Harry was jubilant. The stage had been set for a disgrace and his team was leaving it with honor.

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In the next few minutes the cheering section taught Bill that he did not have to win games to receive its adulation. He had played himself out for Raleigh; that was enough. His captors paused with him before the grandstand and held him firmly while the boys roared their praise. They cheered him in a "long Raleigh," they shouted their love and admiration to him, and finally they sang to him; with bared heads they sang the Raleigh hymn—and they sang it to Bill. For more than three years he had fought them; now at last they had him enthroned. For more than three years he had denied his godhead; now at last he was forced to accept it because he had earned it. For more than three years he had done his best; now at last he had done better than his best, he had risen beyond himself, he had attained greatness; he had striven for the impossible and almost accomplished it—and he had not done it for Bill Royce.

He was cruelly embarrassed, he was ashamed, and he was happier than he had been for seven years. The boys carried him to the training quarters, but there was more glory coming to him. As they passed the crowd of Sanford students

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trailing slowly from the field, a shout from the enemy rose to do him honor.

A Sanford cheer leader ran ahead of the throng and lifted his megaphone.

"A Big Sanford for Bill Royce!" he cried. "A big one, fellows!"

It was big; it was a roar, and the Raleigh students roared their gratitude. Uncomfortable on the shoulders of two young giants, Bill shyly lifted his hand in acknowledgment. It was a long trip to the training quarters, but the cheers did not cease until it was reached, and then Bill was formally cheered again.

Some of the squad was already in the showers by the time he entered the locker room, but wet or dry, clothed or naked, they rushed to him and surrounded him, beat him on the back and shoulders, praised and lauded and loved him. Harry Coombs threw shame to the winds and hugged him openly, and Sam Ross said before them all:

"You're the greatest player I've ever known, Bill. We're all so proud of you we ——"

"I know how you feel," Harry Coombs interrupted, "but I want to bawl and, by God, I'm going to do it." He dropped to a bench, buried

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his face in his hands, and sobbed as if his heart was broken.

Bill's dirty face was fiery red between the streaks of grime, his brown eyes were soft, and his hand was trembling as one teammate after another grasped it in gratitude and friendship.

"I—I can't say anything, fellows," he mumbled brokenly, "I—I ——"

"God, Bill," some one broke in, "you don't have to say anything. Hell, boy, you *did* plenty!"

They left him alone to undress. Something was fermenting like yeast within him. It rose to his eyes; tears gathered. These fellows—all the fellows, these Raleigh fellows, they *loved* him. . . . They. . . .

He slumped on the bench. Oh, damn it to hell, he thought miserably, he was going to cry, too.

CHAPTER XXIII

THERE was a banquet at the Inn that evening, and for three hours more Bill heard his praises hymned. Again and again the same words were scattered like flowers over his bowed head. "The greatest player ever on a Raleigh team. . . . The spirit of a true Raleigh man—the man who doesn't know he's licked, the man who makes defeat as glorious as victory. . . . Great on defense, greater on offense. . . . We are proud of him; Raleigh is proud of him. . . ." And proudest of all was Harry. His young, battered face beamed. Never was a defeated captain so happy, and never was a friend more proud.

Bill was ashamed. He didn't merit all this praise; the love he was receiving was out of all proportion to what he had done. After all, he hadn't won the game; he had merely tried to—and the other fellows had tried just as hard. He was ashamed and happy—and ashamed of his happiness. "They hated me a week ago," he thought and tried to be sensible and bitter, but he could

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be neither; there was no room in his heart for a harsh emotion, no space in his mind for a contemptuous thought; praise beat down his defenses, love routed his logic. He was loved and could only love in return. These men and boys were proud of him; he was far too human and emotional to scorn an emotion so frank and true. It was sweet to be loved; he was happy.

When he returned to his dormitory at ten o'clock he was almost unbearably weary. His new friends had been unwilling to let him go, but he had pleaded his need for rest so earnestly that they finally relented. His hand was shaken until it ached, his back was slapped until it was sore—and the pain was more precious to him than all the A's he had ever received.

He tried to regain his poise as he slowly climbed the three flights of stairs to his room, but he could not think; he did not even want to think. If he thought, he would lose the dizzy joy that bubbled in his mind like champagne, he was losing it, anyway—and he must not lose it. Thinking was impossible; he could only feel, and the feeling was a strange compound of relaxation and nervousness, weariness and throbbing vitality, shame and pride, gratitude and confusion. He shouldn't be

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so pleased, but if he wasn't pleased he was going to be gloomier than he had ever been in his life. He should know better how to estimate such hero worship, such mad adulation. There was no reason why he should value it so, no reason. . . . Lord, Lord, he was tired. And the happiness, bubbled, bubbled. . . .

He switched on the light and at the same instant a hail came from below: "Bill Royce—oh, Bill Royce!"

"Damn," he thought and opened the window. "Yes?" he called down. "What do you want?"

"It's Harry."

"Go to bed, you nut!"

"I'm not going to bed for a week." Harry's voice throbbed with laughter and excitement. "Come on down here."

"Go to hell. I'm tired."

"Aw, come on down, Bill."

"Not on your life. I'm going to bed."

"Just for a minute. Please, Bill."

Again Bill refused, again Harry pleaded, and he continued to plead until Bill gave in.

Harry was waiting at the dormitory entrance. "Come on with me," he said exultantly, taking Bill's arm.

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"Hey, wait a minute," Bill objected, drawing back. "You said just a minute."

"That's all I want. You needn't stay a second if you don't want to. Come on." Harry tugged imperatively and, still holding back, Bill permitted himself to be pulled around the building and into the shade of a giant maple tree in the rear.

Suddenly Harry loosened his hold on Bill's arm, yelled, "Good night," and fled as if pursued by a goblin.

"What th' hell?" Bill muttered and looked around questioningly. Then a chill went through him and he shivered from head to foot. He wanted to move and couldn't; he wanted to speak but something held him dumb; a cry caught in his throat, and his right arm lifted as slowly and heavily as if it were made of lead.

Coming toward him from the shadow of the dormitory was Patricia, unreal in the dim light, tall as a goddess, lovelier even than his memory of her.

"Bill," she said softly, holding out her hand, "Bill," and her rich, velvety voice wavered unevenly.

He could say nothing. She was a phantom, a

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dream, a mirage—not Patricia, anything but Patricia.

“Bill,” she said again and placed her hand in his. The cool touch of her hand brought reality. His eyes blinked, the blind stare departed, and at last he knew he saw her.

“Patricia,” he whispered hoarsely. “Why, why—Patricia . . . ”

“I ought to be ashamed of myself,” she began nervously while he clung to her hand, “hunting you like this behind a dormitory, but—oh, Bill, I just had to see you and tell you how proud I am of you.”

The last little bubble burst, and the gloom that he had dreaded came. “Proud?” he repeated questioningly. “Are *you* proud of me, Patricia?” His grip loosened. He didn’t want her to be proud of him because he was a football player. It was all right for the fellows to feel that way, but with Patricia it was different. He didn’t know where the difference lay; all he knew was that depression surrounded him like a dark fog; his happiness slipped away.

“Why do you sound so sad, Bill?” she asked, peering at him in the darkness. “Don’t you want me to be proud?”

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"All I want is to see you and hold you. I ——"

"You're evading!" she cried. "I've hurt you. What is it, Bill?"

"Let's not stay here. The fellows inside will hear us." He passed his arm under hers and led her away from the building and down the hill to the river. They walked in silence. Patricia was wondering wherein she had erred, and Bill was wondering why her pride in his playing cut like an insult. He had been so happy to see her, happier than he had ever been in his life, and then she had said she was proud of him and his happiness had turned to pain.

There was a bench on the river bank and they sat down on it. The night was cold and Bill had come without any overcoat. He turned up his collar.

"Won't you be cold?" Patricia asked solicitously.

"Not very. It doesn't matter." God, he was tired—tired. . . . His voice took on a little color as he said, "I think I'm dreaming. You can't be here," but the ring of eagerness was lacking.

Patricia ignored the implied compliment and brushed aside the protecting devices of common-places. "Bill," she asked, turning toward him, "do you still care for me?"

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"Oh, yes!" There was life in his voice now; the avowal rang true.

"Then why don't you want me to be proud of you? You were magnificent today. You played the way I've always wanted you to play. Can't I be proud?"

"Yes—yes, of course; I want you to be proud. That's not it, dear; it's—oh, I don't know. It's just that football's mattered so much today and I'm pretty nearly dead and—well—beside you, it's nothing. It's been wonderful, but I forgot all about it when I saw you, and somehow it was like a cold blanket when you mentioned the game. I wanted—I don't know just what I did want, but ——" he hesitated, lost in the confusion of his own emotions.

"I think I understand," she said slowly. "It seems insignificant beside love. It's the sort of false emphasis movies put on things; the fellow wins the football game and gets the girl—that sort of rot. And you thought I was bigger than such nonsense, didn't you, Bill? You thought I could take football as football—and, well, you as you. Isn't that it?"

He stared at her admiringly. She had analyzed his emotion when he could not. "Yes," he agreed,

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alive and passionately in earnest, "that's it. If I already had you, I'd want you to be proud of me today. I'll admit that. But I haven't got you, and so I don't want you to come to me just because I made a few end runs. That's movie stuff. If we'd only won, the situation would be perfect. All we need is a moon for a fade-out." His voice grew harsh, bitter. "You've made everything that happened today cheap. I just *felt* it; now I understand."

"You don't understand at all," Patricia contradicted, laughing softly. "This isn't a movie scene, Bill dear. You didn't win the game—and you did win the one against Custus. I saw that, too, but I didn't come to you then. I've seen you play three times before this season, but I managed to stay away. I didn't mean to see you tonight either, but, you see, Bill, I *had* to because—because of the *way* you played. I had to tell you I'd found something out, something important." She hesitated as Bill turned toward her expectantly. "I found out," she continued a little uncertainly, "that you were different from—from what I'd thought. You're bigger—and—and different. I came to apologize, Bill." Her proud head sank. "I wasn't fair," she murmured.

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Bill wanted to take her in his arms. He didn't want to talk; he was tired and happy and confused. He couldn't think; he was too tired almost to feel. Something was all wrong; all these arguments and explanations were wrong—but Patricia had seen him play three times. He was cold and tired—and she had *had* to come to him.

"Say something!" Patricia cried. "Bill, say something!"

"I don't know what to say, Patricia dearest. I love you. I'll always love you. I know that now. I'm afraid to touch you and—and—if you aren't—if you don't love me—oh, Patricia, why did you see me?" His voice was a blend of despair and hope, of eagerness and fear.

Again her head sank. "I'm not fair," she murmured unhappily. "I gave way to an impulse—and I've spoiled your day. Bill dear, I don't know. I love you now, but I don't trust my love. I've got just enough sense left to distrust it. You've done something unselfish and splendid, and I love you for it. You thrilled me as I've never been thrilled before. You ——"

"Wait!" Bill's command was almost a shout in the stillness of the night. "Don't torture me. I've got my pride, too. I love you, I want you

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—but I don't want to get you with a football game. If you don't love *me*, say so—and let's stop this. What's all the damned analyzing for, anyhow? You turned me down once because you didn't like the way I played. Now you do like it. Are you going to take me just for that?" Dark though the night was, she could see the blaze of contempt in his eyes; she could hear the pain and scorn in his voice.

Trembling a little, she rose to her feet. "You're right, Bill," she admitted miserably; "I do analyze too much. I think I'm afraid to love you. You move me too much. You scare me. I know this though now; you can take me when you want me. You're the only man I've ever loved, and I don't think I'll love another one. I'm afraid, though." He stood beside her and she lifted her head to look into his eyes. "When you want me, come for me, Bill; I'll be waiting."

Puzzled, he looked down at her. The cold wind cut through him and his body ached. Never, never, had he been so tired. Patricia's words depressed him; they killed his ardor.

"I can't think," he whispered, passing his hand wearily over his forehead. "I—I don't want you

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that way, Patricia. It makes me sick to have you say you're afraid of me. It hurts. . . ."

Patricia swayed into his arms. "Oh, hold me, Bill," she pleaded; "hold me, dear."

Mechanically his arms embraced her, but he felt no emotion except confusion and weariness. She was crying, and he didn't know what to do. Finally she gained control of herself, dried her eyes, and stepped back out of his arms.

"Bill," she said brokenly, "I've been vicious to you. I haven't meant to be. Please believe that. Take me back, please—and try to forgive me. Some day maybe I'll understand and then I won't be afraid. Try to bear with me until then."

He took her hand in his, bent and kissed it.

"I've been cruel to you, too. I love you, Patricia darling, and I know you'll trust me some day. When you do, I'll be waiting."

She lifted her head for his kiss. When he left her at Harry's fraternity house a little later, his depression had lifted. There was no promise between them but his fear was gone. Something—he didn't know what—had happened to him in that football game, and something had happened to Patricia, too. They were different people somehow. He was almost glad there was no

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promise. He needed time to think, to recognize himself.

He walked slowly across the campus, a smile trembling on his lips.

"Oh, Bill!" It was a freshman. The boy had spoken impulsively and held out his hand. Then, frightened at his own temerity, he drew back, ashamed and embarrassed.

Bill gripped the lad's hand firmly. "Thanks, old man," he said heartily. "Good night."

"Good night!" The boy's voice sang.

Once more Bill climbed the long three flights of stairs, and once more he was confused and weary, but the happiness was back again—and he felt sure that it was there to stay.

CHAPTER XXIV

IT was ten o'clock the next morning when Bill woke up. His first thought was, "I'll see Patricia." He opened his eyes, yawned and stretched, and saw Harry Coombs sitting on the edge of his couch.

Harry was rather badly bruised and battered, but he was grinning. There was a big purple blotch under his left eye and a big red bruise on his right cheek; his lower lip was swollen, and a strip of court plaster decorated his chin. He was a battered but happy warrior.

"Gosh, you're lazy, Bill!" he cried, thumping Bill's thigh with his fist. "I've been sitting here ten minutes wondering whether to wake you up or not. I'm a big-hearted guy, I am."

"You're a sight," Bill said, laughing. "You're certainly chewed up." He moved and cringed. "I've got an ache or two myself. I'm going to stay in bed a week."

"You can't. You've got to read the papers. Lord, Willyum, you're a hero. You're splattered

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all over the front pages with pictures and everything."

Bill attempted to appear airily indifferent and failed sadly. "Is that so?" he said lightly. "I suppose I gave my all for dear old Raleigh." Then he entirely ruined the effect by sticking one foot out of bed and sitting up. He wanted to see the newspapers and he wanted to see them right away.

Harry laughed. "You're as indifferent as hell, aren't you? Well, be indifferent to this, too," and he thrust a letter into Bill's hand.

Bill glanced at the handwriting and ordered Harry out of the room. "Get the hell out of here," he commanded impolitely. "I can't stand your grinning before breakfast."

"Is zat so? I wouldn't go, but Celia's waiting over at the house." He paused at the door, announced nastily, "Pat left two hours ago," and slammed the door after him.

Bill hardly heard; he was already reading the letter.

"Bill dear," Patricia had written:

"Aunt Martha wants to leave in a little while and I suppose it's just as well. I do want to tell you, though, that I'm awfully happy this morning.

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We made a dreadful mess of things last night, but I don't care. You were worn out and I was in a silly emotional state. Everything seems wonderful now, though.

"Don't come to see me. I want to get straightened out, but please write. We'll know where we stand by the time you graduate—and I'm not worrying. I'm just happy.

"I don't blame you for being hurt last night, but you didn't quite understand. I wasn't congratulating you so much as I was apologizing. You don't lack what I thought you lacked—and somehow I know now that I don't know you at all. I'm wondering if you know yourself. I'm pretty sure you don't.

"It doesn't matter, Bill dear. Write and wait. I'll get over my nonsense, and when I do you won't have anything to worry about ever. When I'm sure, I'll be sure forever. I'm sure now I'm going to be sure, but I'm not going to say I am until I am. That's fair, isn't it?

"I hope you're happy today because I'm so happy—and I've had a rather bad time of it this last year.

"Gurglingly,
"Patricia."

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Bill read the note three times and then blushed furiously as he realized that he was kissing it. "God, I'm an ass," he muttered and then laughed aloud. His laugh was a shout. What a hell of a good world it was! . . .

The world stayed good that November Sunday. Snow had fallen during the night, but by the time Bill emerged from the dormitory, the storm had passed and the sun was shining. The branches of the trees were leafed with little puffs of snow, the campus was a smooth sheet of glimmering white, broken here and there into dark paths where the students had stepped. Patches of snow were caught in the ivy vines, and the brick buildings seemed a gayer red in contrast.

Bill's short trip to breakfast was a triumphal march. Every passing student paused to greet him, and when he entered the cafeteria he was welcomed with a shout that embarrassed him with its volume and moved him with its hearty spontaneity. He blushed, waved an acknowledgment, and tried to look unconcerned, but the day for indifference, real or simulated, was past; he was pleased and flattered, and no amount of thinking, however logical and sound, could make him feel otherwise.

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This love which was being offered him might not be real, it might be only temporary, but while it lasted, at least, it was genuine and wholehearted. Raleigh College loved him and his heart responded; resist as he would in the weeks which followed the game, an affection for the college budded and bloomed.

Even the shyest freshman spoke to him now, and the lordliest senior was flattered by his nod. It was a shock to him to discover that he liked these boys and that he wanted them to like him. Some of them even invaded his room, and he found himself sorry when they left. Some of them were intelligent, some stupid; some of them were fine, some coarse; most of them were immature, but he responded to them as he never had succeeded in responding to the group of esthetic youths who had clustered around Freddy Schiller. They had been too self-consciously superior, too definitely aware of their culture, and some of them had had an esoteric subtlety in regard to sex which had made Bill a little sick. He preferred healthy male lust.

He and Patricia corresponded regularly, and he was waiting, happy and confident. He had his job, in spite of himself he had made a place

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for himself at Raleigh, and he was going to get his girl. If he hadn't been rather ashamed of the pleasure he was getting out of being idolized, he would have been entirely happy. The shame, however, was real and there was reason for it; either he had been a fool for three years or he was being one now. He felt he was certainly a fool when he gave up his job at the bank. He had earned the money but he could no longer take it. Quixotic or not, he could not receive pay for the affection which was being showered upon him. That twenty-five dollars a week made him feel like a hypocrite; he preferred waiting table in the commons.

Feeling inconsistent and rather absurd, Bill set out to enjoy his last semester in college. Wise or foolish, for one term at least he determined to experience as much of "college life" as he could and found that, for him at least, it was a bit of a job. He could sit in a bar with a group of seniors and have a very good time over a few glasses of beer, but he could not join in a college cheer without feeling something of an ass. Back-slapping was an impossibility to him, reverence for the president or dean even more impossible, though the president was more worthy of reverence than

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Bill realized, and any interest in undergraduate politics was entirely beyond his power. He didn't want to join a fraternity any more than he had wanted to when he was a freshman, and he accepted his election to the senior honor society simply because he was ashamed to decline the invitation.

He would never be the "representative Raleigh man," President Stanton extolled, but he was acquiring an affection for the college which might have astonished the president almost as much as it did Bill himself. He was coming to love the old brick buildings, the wide lawns and leafy elms, the spectacle of boys hurrying to chapel each morning munching a doughnut or apple and probably trying to read the college paper at the same time; he was finding new charm in the twilight hums, in the music that pulsed through the campus on moonlight nights; and, above all, he was finding something precious in the gay greetings and careless camaraderie. He learned to say, "Hi, there, fella," or, "'Lo, gang," as casually and lightly as the next one, and he found that smiles came easily once he permitted his resentment to die.

A brief talk with the dean killed the last of

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the resentment once and for all. Bill took a cruel delight in that talk; it seemed a justification for his about face, and, though he did not know it, he might have been less cruel if he had felt that his pleasure in college was really justified. He unfurled the flag of rebellion once more mainly to assure himself that he was true to himself after all.

It was shortly after the beginning of the second term that he met the dean one morning in front of the administration building. Bill had no intention of doing more than bowing politely, but the dean stopped and held out a friendly hand.

"I've been wanting to see you for nearly two months, Royce," he said, "and somehow you've always escaped me. I want to congratulate you on your playing in the Sanford game. You did wonders for Raleigh that day."

Bill could tolerate such talk from the students, he could even like it, but from the dean it was disgusting. Instantly he was cold with anger.

"Did wonders for Raleigh?" he repeated questioningly. "How?"

"Why, you won a moral victory for us, of course." The dean was taken aback by Bill's ques-

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tion but he managed to retain his air of bluff heartiness.

"I see. I didn't understand. I thought it was just a football game."

The sarcasm was open, and the dean's jowls reddened.

"You are too modest," he said, determined to be pleasant to the hero. "Only a man imbued with the true Raleigh spirit could play as you did."

The remark snapped the last weak line of Bill's patience.

"I did only what I was well paid to do," he said definitely, "and I doubt if that's modesty."

"Paid?" The dean's voice faltered, and he looked around for an excuse to escape. No one was near, however, and he was forced to listen.

"Certainly I was paid. You knew that, I'm sure. At least five other men on the team were also paid—and you knew that. If you didn't, you know it now. What are you going to do about it?" Bill was deliberately insolent, but the dean did not dare to challenge his insolence.

"I don't believe it," he vowed, dropping his glance and flushing more rosily.

"I'm willing to prove it any time you wish. I'll name the other men for you, too—if you ab-

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solutely insist." Bill's voice dripped contempt and his words were a dare. "I'm willing to do anything to clear up this curse of professionalism. It's a disgrace to Raleigh, you know. Call on me for help when you begin. I'll be the first martyr. Good morning."

He turned on his heel and walked away while the dean looked after him muttering most undeanelike curses. Bill knew that no action would be taken, and the dean knew that he knew. From that day on the dean never spoke to Bill again, and Bill found satisfaction and justification when the dean's eyes shifted away from him as they passed each other in silence.

He had cleared away his last grudge against the college, but he hadn't yet cleared away his last doubts about himself. He was enjoying himself, but he did not feel comfortable in his pleasure. He didn't like the persistent idea that he was being a fool; no more did he like the idea that he had been one, but the idea would not down. Logic was no longer there to support him, because there was no logic in his pleasure. Either he had lost something valuable or he was valuing something cheap and meretricious. Finally he took his problem to Tommy Graham.

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"I've been watching you change, Bill," Graham said, smiling until his face was a network of deep wrinkles, "and I've taken an unholy glee in the exhibition. You're having a glorious time and you're heartily ashamed of yourself, aren't you?"

"Yes, I am," Bill confessed frankly. "I know damn well there's no sense in the friendship I'm getting or the pleasure I get out of it. I went football crazy for a few minutes—and now I'm the white-haired boy of Raleigh. I'm having a whale of a good time and I'll probably graduate with a flock of C's to my credit. I don't give a hoot about the C's, but they stand for what I'm becoming—a regular little rah-rah boy. I'll be sobbing over 'Hail Raleigh' next."

Graham leaned back in his chair and laughed. Bill's earnestness amused him. "You're making a mighty struggle to be sensible," he said, "and you're losing ground every minute. Well, I'm glad to be in at the death, and I want to be the first to say, 'well done.'"

Bill felt rather sheepish. He knew he was something to laugh at, but he didn't like the laughter. "I haven't done well at all," he protested sharply. "I know I've been right. You can't learn anything and spend all your time on activi-

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ties, and all this hero worship of a football player is bunk. You'd think the colleges were run for football. Well, I was sensible and everybody hated me. Now I'm being a fool and everybody slobbers over me—and I'm just enough of an idiot to enjoy it. Either I'm out of step or everybody else is—and I'd like to know what you think."

He had called on Graham at his home in the evening. They were sitting in the little library before a log fire. A small desk lamp added its pale illumination to the flame in the fireplace, but the room was dim and shadowy. Graham puffed thoughtfully at his pipe, and then said:

"You were intellectually right, Bill, but emotionally wrong—and you didn't get along because most of us feel more than we think. Of course, much too much emphasis is placed on activities and athletics; they do get in the way of an education, but there is such a thing, you know, as a happy mean. You made the mistake, too, of thinking you were a mature man when you were a freshman. You weren't. You were just an over-serious youngster—and you were so emotional you were afraid of your emotions. You could have loved Raleigh College so much that you didn't

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dare love her at all. You were so serious about an education that you were willing to sacrifice everything for it—and you forgot that your youth was precious.”

He paused, tapped the tobacco in his pipe with his forefinger, puffed vigorously, and then as the pipe began to draw, he continued almost dreamily:

“You’ve always been rather pathetic to me, Bill, because you were throwing away your last chance to be young—really young, I mean—foolish and emotional and irresponsible and illogical. College is youth’s last stand. That’s one reason it’s so glamorous. Commencement is always sad to me.

“Everything about college is a little sad to me, I think—and if I’m sentimental, I’m glad I can be. Almost everything about college is beautiful, too—from the student’s standpoint, I mean. To a logical mind, much of it is nonsense, but nonsense has its place in this life of ours. Stevenson says some place to give him a man with spirit enough to be a fool. I feel the same way. Youth has the spirit to be idiotic. I’m always preaching the need for more and more senseless nonsense. A spontaneous rally certainly isn’t a sensible proceeding, but I never see the boys whirling and shout-

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ing about the campus that I don't get a thrill. Wasted time? Of course. That's one reason it's delightful.

"I've worked hard all my life and I believe in work, but I believe in play, too—and I believe in foolish loyalties, Bill, and in hero worship, and irresponsible gayety. There have always been athletic gods. There always will be. Just now you're one. Tomorrow you won't be. *Carpe diem*, my boy. It's like the bubble on the river. You remember Scott? A moment there, then gone forever. I've spent my life studying history, and if I've learned anything; I've learned that today is here and that tomorrow is—well, tomorrow. Like empires, we rise and fall. It is worth while to strive for future glory, of course; there's no salt to life without ambition, but today's joy shouldn't always be sacrificed for it—not while you're young anyhow, not while you're young."

Again he paused and Bill waited. He thought of what Mr. Stedman had said—that he was too young rather than too mature. Lord, how he had sneered, and now love was rubbing his nose in the dust. Graham was right; he had thrown away his last chance for youth. New happiness was ahead of him, he hoped, but it wouldn't be

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this happiness; it would be different. Maybe it would be finer even, possibly more intense, but it wouldn't be the same. He had felt that madness during the Sanford game because he was still young, because with his twenty-sixth birthday near he was still capable of bursting his heart to attempt the impossible. Yes, he had treated his youth shabbily.

"I love a college," Graham went on slowly, sinking deeper into his chair and staring at the flames. "I love the aspiration of it, the romance, the new life which comes to it each fall. A college is eternally young. Each fall it is reborn. And there's something old and mellow about a college, too—and that's its charm, age and youth blending together as naturally as new ivy clings to an old building. It's very lovely, Bill, and its life is very illogical. I'm glad"—he turned and smiled—"you've gone a little mad in time. And I apologize for my letter to Stedman. I shall write and tell him so. You're capable of being a fool. I withdraw my objection."

THE END



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Returning to the campus and to the atmosphere of *The Plastic Age*, Percy Marks here tells the story of Bill Royce and of the perennially young Younger Generation. Bill had big ideas, a tremendous sensitive pride, a protective cynicism. He could play good football, but he had come to college to get an education. When football began to interfere with his studies Bill was all for giving up football. But that wasn't good college spirit: his professors didn't like it; his fellow students didn't like it; his girl didn't like it. Bill's story has moments of tragedy.

Frank and plain-spoken, Mr. Marks strikes deeper here than the social questions of sex and drinking, deeper than the bewildering tangle of conformity and individuality, to the absorbing problem of youth's adjustment to the balance and proportion of living.

Mr. Marks' California childhood included adventures with mad bulls and the exciting and gratifying game of being teacher's pet at school and a hell-fiend at home. (The last term is his own.)

Percy Marks was born in Covelo, California, in 1891 and was graduated from the University of California in 1912. He claims to have been the least distinguished person in his class. Having acquired a Harvard M. A. in 1914 he became an instructor in English at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and later at Dartmouth and Brown Universities. He has not taught since 1924, but since then he has lectured all over the country, written five books and gotten married. He approves highly of married life.





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